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Angela Dalle Vacche

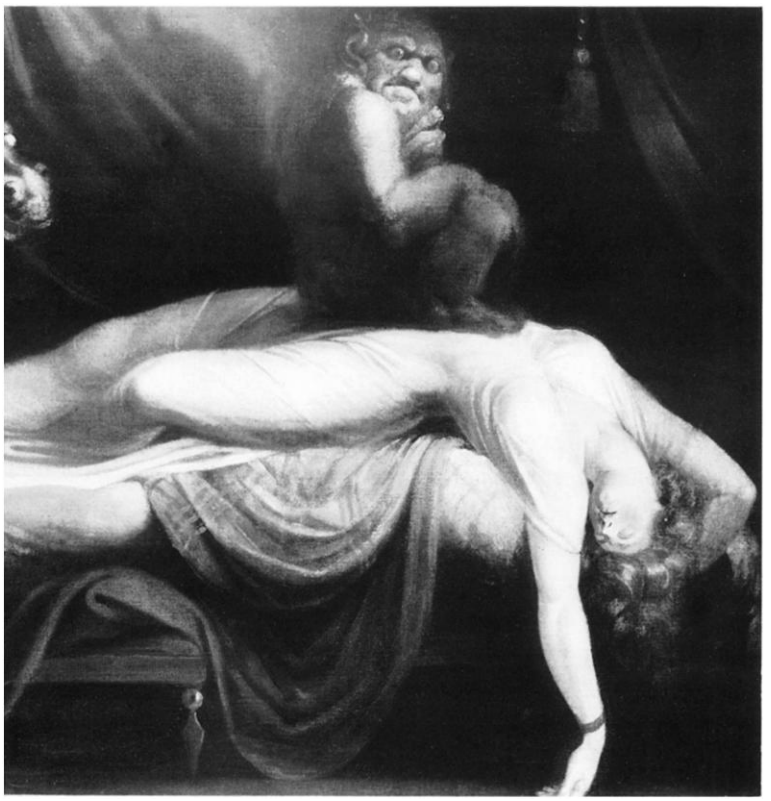
Painting Thoughts, Listening to Images

Eric Rohmer's *The Marquise of O . . .*

(top) Giulietta (Edith Clever) asleep under the influence of the potion in Eric Rohmer's *The Marquise of O* (1975); (bottom) Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781)

The confrontation between word and image is so central in Eric Rohmer's cinema and writings that, in *The Marquise of O* (1975), a film based on Heinrich von Kleist's eponymous novella (1811), the director inevitably summons a tradition dating back to the eighteenth century and carrying over into the nineteenth. In the *Laokoon* (1767), Lessing argued that literature is an art of time, while painting should primarily deal with space. The nineteenth-century British aesthetician Matthew Arnold stated that "poetry thinks and the arts do not."[1] Were we to consider jointly Lessing's and Arnold's views on the verbal and visual poles, we would conclude that, as an art of time, literature is only for the mind, while as an art of space, painting is only for the senses. It is precisely these oppositional terms that Rohmer sets out to rearrange by attributing a plastic edge to words and by endowing images with an introspective aura. In *The Marquise of O*, painting thinks. It is neither a mask nor a camouflage flattening the cinematic image but refers instead to the characters' mental activity, thus lending depth to an otherwise one-dimensional surface and making it multifaceted, if not architectural.

To be sure, even though Rohmer transcends the opposition of word and image in *The Marquise of O*, the dialectic of literature and painting remains the founding problem of all his creative and critical work. While Rohmer's statements on this subject may seem contradictory, in *The Marquise of O* the polarities of word and image, literature and paint-



ing, undergo a reversal as powerful as the joining of opposites in an oxymoron. By painting thoughts and making images out of words, Rohmer demonstrates that both his preparatory approach to and his cinematic execution of Kleist's text thrive on the oscillation between *ut pictura poesis* and *ut poesis pictura*. That is to say, as mute poetry, painting opens to abstraction, whereas as a speaking picture, poetry absorbs the senses. In the end, Rohmer's approach defies Lessing's and Arnold's attribution of separate areas of competence to each art form.

In a 1988 interview, Rohmer stated that he thinks of himself not as a director-painter but as a director-architect for whom the cinema is the art of organizing a staging in order to make visible a spatial organization already latent in the world.[2] This description echoes the young Rohmer's admiration for Murnau's *Faust* (1926), where he saw the subordination of painting to the brute photographic power of the cinema releasing the inherent beauty or pictorialism of reality.[3]

Rohmer's thinking is thus in line with Pascal's famous aphorism, "How vain an art is painting, which attracts our admiration for representations of objects which we do not admire in the original."[4] Excessive aestheticism occurs when painting is not subordinated to the staging of the world, and therefore, for Rohmer, cinema can benefit from painting as long as the two meet in a shared sense of theatrical space—one not based on artificial display but linked to the world through the living presence of the actors.[5] Where painting becomes invisible or transparent, either as a form of introspection or as the "soul" of the world, language acquires enormous power—to the point of dominating the mise-en-scène with a quasi-visual impact. In short, word and image exist between theater and architecture because literature, the art of time, stages itself and becomes a spatial object, while painting, the art of space, lends a temporal accent to labyrinthine psychological developments. Put another way, the dialectic of word and image in *The Marquise of O* is predicated on the conflict between the mind and the senses, reason and emotions.

Word and Image in Rohmer's Theory of the Cinema

It is not difficult to find statements made by Rohmer in favor of painting and against the word, but it is just as easy to find him speaking in defense of literature at the expense of the image. For example, in 1971, after the international success of a brilliantly verbal film like *Ma Nuit chez Maud* (1969), the director declared that a cinema reduced to the image

> hasn't anywhere much to go. In the realm of pure plastic expression, the portrayal of action, and even the presentation of life, the cinema has done wonders; but it has proved pretty restricting when it comes to portraying reflection, a character's developing awareness of himself, which is the subject not only of most French but also of most Anglo-Saxon literature, which is as moralizing as ours. Purely visual cinema was incapable of exploring this realm.[6]

Such a statement in favor of the word and the suggestion of an incompatibility between the visual and the reflective dimensions may lead one to assume that with *Ma Nuit chez Maud*, Rohmer is rehashing Alexandre Astruc's call for a literary cinema and subscribing to Astruc's denunciation of the "tyranny of the visual." In 1949, in a seminal essay for *Écran Français* entitled "Naissance d'une nouvelle avant-garde: le caméra-stylo," Astruc formally declared that the seventh art had come of age. The critic stated that the cinema could aspire to the rank enjoyed by painting and the novel, yet the visual arts quickly disappeared from his discussion. Without the beneficial intervention of the word or of a literary orientation, the cinematic image by itself, for Astruc, was thick, heavy, and reducible to a single meaning: that of the object shown. Astruc's ideal film-maker would use the camera with the same liberty and subtlety with which a writer uses the pen.

Clearly, for Astruc, "literature" meant any kind of writing devoted to the exploration of the mind or to the psychology of reason. In this regard, we can still find provocative Astruc's claim that, were he alive today, Descartes would use a 16mm camera to "write" his *Discourse on Method.* Astruc's invitation to take full advantage of the literary and philosophical potential of cinema found an excellent interpreter in Eric Rohmer, who even defined his artistic identity in the light of a literary tradition:

> In French there is a word *moraliste* that I don't think has any equivalent in English. It doesn't really have much connection with the word "moral." A *moraliste* is someone who is interested in the description of what goes on inside man. He's concerned with states of mind and feelings. For example, in the eighteenth [sic] century Pascal was a *moraliste*, and a *moraliste* is a particularly French kind of writer like La Bruyère or La Rochefoucauld.[7]

While the director's *moraliste* side and verbal wit in *Ma Nuit chez Maud* are undeniable, it would be a mistake to think that Astruc's Cartesian *logos* can neutralize the profound visual vocation of Rohmer's cinema.

The link between Astruc's principle of the "caméra-stylo" and the literary flavor of Rohmer's cinema may be apparent to the critics but it is not always obvious to Rohmer himself. In an interview published in 1982, he stated:

> I don't believe in "direct writing" in the cinema. There are not so many examples of that, and in general the films that have been made like that are not among the most successful. There is no such thing as what Alexandre Astruc has called the "camera-pen," that is anyone who makes a film the way he writes a book. The work in film is always a job of staging, and staging begins by adaptation of a work which exists by itself in a literary way. There is no film which can exist literarily in one way or another.[8]

Rohmer's rejection of literature reminds us that his interest in painting dates back to his essays on film and the other arts in "Le Celluloid et le marbre," published by *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1955. In this context, Rohmer's recuperation of painting was most compatible with André Bazin's cinema of

realism, which opposed what Rohmer called "the weakening of space" brought about by Soviet montage, a technique based on "leaping" from one viewpoint to another, with little regard for "the expressive value of relationships of size and mass, of the movement of lines within the limits of the screen."[9]

While condemning the impulse behind montage to reshape the world and express the vision of a revolutionary age, Rohmer deeply admired the films of Murnau and Rossellini, where the world is not fragmented for the sake of a thesis but gradually revealed as a complex and resonant whole. For Rohmer, the cinema of montage, or of stylistic manipulation, can never improve on reality because beauty is a quality not of art but of the world.[10] Through his realist stance, the director embraced the Pascalian theme of the hidden God. As Roger Hazelton explains, for the Jansenist philosopher: "All things cover up some mystery; all things are the veils that cover God. Christians ought to recognize him in everything."[11] Because God's hand is present in the world, stylistic changes or technical transformations are a form of arrogance or self-love. As a corollary to the presence of God in the world, Pascal argued that visible things represent the invisible, "being the sensible image of what is spiritual, so that nature becomes an image of grace."[12] While rejecting literature because, like montage, it distorts reality with metaphors, Rohmer argued that cinema as painting and as space was "more suited than . . . marble in capturing the eternal essence of things."[13] The emphasis on exteriority and appearance, which is typical of the screen and of the canvas, was neither a limit nor a hindrance to the exploration of an intangible, invisible dimension; on the contrary, it was a vantage point from which to depict the life of the soul in all its movements, thus turning literal portrayal into spiritual figuration.

Rohmer's Approach to Kleist's Text: The Meanings of Adaptation

In the shift from Rohmer's theoretical statements to his adaptation of Kleist's novella, the interaction of word and image settles into a system of oxymorons as tight as the extreme dualities and unexpected reversals in the plot: the Marquise of O is Giulietta, a young widow with a young child living with her family in a northern Italian town, a citadel which is besieged by a Russian army during the Napoleonic Wars. After being assaulted by a group of ferocious soldiers, the Marquise is rescued by a handsome Russian count, who later rapes her while she is deeply asleep under the effects of a potion. The child Giulietta subsequently bears is as inexplicable to her as a divine gift or a sudden manifestation of the grace of God, which cannot be earned, only received. After much anguish, Giulietta decides to place an announcement in the local newspaper stating that she will marry the father of her child if he comes forward by a certain date. The tale does not quite end with the reunion of the Count and Giulietta; it really concludes with her recognition that human nature is double-sided. Likewise, for Rohmer, the screen has two sides, one looking toward painting and the other toward the cinema.

In the film, the word calls attention to itself, instead of simply functioning as a source or goal for the image. This exhibition of the word is closely linked to the fact that Rohmer, by shooting the film in German, was especially sensitive to the sound, shape, and rhythm of a foreign language. Furthermore, he used professional German theater actors who could most skillfully carry the weight of a literary text and gratify his taste for an ethnography of conversation and a cinema through which "to explore how we live in relation to how we speak, who we are in relation to what we say."[14]

Rejecting Astruc's one-way association of the cinematic image with the literary word, Rohmer based the visual nature of the literary text on the novella itself, which he approached as a ready-made script that needed little alteration for the screen. Kleist's text, despite its archaic-sounding German (which the producers of the film at first opposed) is, for Rohmer, an *objet trouvé:* what strikes him are its cinematic qualities. First of all, its length (a mere 40 pages) does not clash with the approximate duration of an art film available for wide commercial distribution—in this case, one hour and thirty-five minutes. And Rohmer has enough time to convey how underneath the relentless sequence of short sentences lurks a taste for the paradoxical, the supernatural, and even the bizarre. More specifically, the film's spoken dialogues have the crispness of written speech, yet through the decor and acting style the

spectators are made to feel that the situations they see are intarsia of word and image. The director's obsession with the word never degenerates into verbosity. Instead, it binds the viewers even more tightly to the film's images, since what the characters think is not always expressed in what they say, but the contents of their minds hover in the visual spaces—gestures, poses, objects, expressions—that exist between the ordinary and polite sentences they offer to each other.

Second, the novella takes place in 1799, in the middle of the Age of Sentimentality, when the external devices of pose and gesture signified internal states of mind (approximately one century before Freud's discovery of the unconscious). Therefore, Kleist's narrator describes everything from the outside, paralleling the position of Rohmer's camera, which can only record what goes on externally. But Rohmer turns action into introspection in order to deal with the problems of self-image and self-knowledge. As a result of his emphasis on exteriority, Kleist has to detail with amazing precision the movements and the attitudes of his characters, while also mentioning the objects that surround them, as if he had in mind a list of all the props necessary to Rohmer's staging of the text. In short, the intense visual nature of Kleist's very literary text allows Rohmer to carry out an adaptation which is not a unilateral translation of one medium into another but a mirroring or refraction of word into image and vice versa. This duplication is a reversal across different signs which never collapses into a perfect identity but instead thrives on the very otherness of word and image.

The metaphor of the mirror subtends Rohmer's relation to Kleist, but the characters in the novella and on the screen hardly ever look at themselves in the mirrors that hang on the walls. During the scenes of family debates about the Count's plea for the Marquise's hand, or in the course of quiet meals, or in the midst of highly controlled rituals of arriving and departing or sitting and standing, the characters' figures reappear only in small, marginal portions of the house mirrors. Only once do we see Giulietta looking at herself in a mirror, and this rare instance of self-reflection occurs just before her reconciliation with her father, who has violently opposed the Count's romantic interest. Although she is not aware of the Count's dual nature, she has begun to find a new strength in herself despite her father's indictment. By contrast, when we see Giulietta painting in her room, she is totally indifferent to the huge mirror decorating the wall beside her.

In pointing to the characters' struggle between rigid social norms and self-evaluation, the mirror is not a mere decorative element of the mise-en-scène but a clue, instead, to the director's special chemistry of word and image for his work of adaptation. This metanarrative function of the mirror becomes clear in two instances. First, Giulietta's painting is interrupted by the arrival of her daughter, who wants to show her progress in calligraphy. Beautifully designed letters of the alphabet on a white page—a, k, l, f—are propped up on the painter's canvas before the reflections of Giulietta, the daughter, and a servant unwind on the silent surface of the mirror as they leave the room. The alphabet, the painting, the specularity of the screen in relation to the spectators, the movements of the figures resembling the modulations of a chain of thoughts—these are the ingredients of Rohmer's cinema in one of its most intimate settings: the study of an early nineteenth-century woman painter.[15]

Finally, Rohmer's formula for adaptation is spelled out in the first scene of *The Marquise of O*, which takes place inside an inn. Rohmer's camera intercepts the figure of a waiter moving away from its reflection in the mirror over the bar. He is serving drinks to a few male customers, who mock the Marquise's decision to publicize her pregnancy in the local newspaper. As they gossip, the Gothic letters of the announcement's German text take over the whole screen. This opening sequence anticipates the end of the narrative, which is marked by a comparable dialectic of word and image. The final words of Kleist's text occupy a title card: "A whole line of Russians now followed the first," and this folk-tale ending replaces the image of Giulietta and the count at last embracing. The mirror, then, is the appropriate figure for a cinematic adaptation which begins and ends with a written text reproducing the role of the image.

Adaptation may be seen not only in terms of the metaphor of the mirror but also as a form of intellectual rape or textual alteration. At first sight, rape may seem too violent a metaphor, given the intense compatibility between Kleist's pictorialism and Rohmer's literariness. To be sure, the director had declared that his attraction toward the novella was based on the fact that he did not have to "touch" it.

Rohmer, however, changed Kleist's text in three small but highly significant ways.

To begin with, in the novella, the rape of the Marquise is suggested by an ellipsis in the narrative. A dash stands out against the white of Kleist's page, at once an unassuming and haunting marker: " . . . wo sie auch völlig bewusstlos niedersank. Hier—traf er, da bald darauf ihre erschrockenen Frauen erschienen, Anstalten, einen Arzt zu rufen. . . . " ("... where she sank down completely unconscious. Here—he made arrangements, since her frightened maids soon appeared on the scene, to call a doctor. . . . ").[16] But in the film, this empty, or at least graphically impoverished, place is filled with an explicit reference to a painting, Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781).[17] In this famous gothic fantasy, a beautiful young woman, aroused by some powerful dream, has partly thrown herself from the couch. Her attitude of extreme abandon shows that she is prey of an incubus, or the ugly little demon that squats just below her chest; meanwhile, a horse with staring, gleaming eyes transfixes her voluptuous body from beyond the curtain. Likewise, Giulietta, who has drunk a sleeping potion to calm her nerves after the attempted rape by the soldiers, appears in a seductive pose to the Russian count. With a lamp in his hand, he discovers her during his nightly tour of the conquered outpost. Her shimmering white nightgown blinds the Count, whose intense gaze replaces the staring eyes of Fuseli's horse. His transgressive behavior is signified, first, by the frontality of the camera on his face in close-up, and second, by the darkness that engulfs him and us, as if Fuseli's incubus had traveled into his mind and our eyes. As Pascal Bonitzer has remarked, the invisibility of Fuseli's incubus in Rohmer's film echoes the ellipsis of violence in Kleist's text.[18] Thus Rohmer reorients the violence of the Count's action, turning it away from the Marquise, an outside object, to the recesses of the Count's subjectivity. In the same way, Fuseli's painting is not so much a spectacle of female eroticism as the mirror of a dark male desire that the spectator is inevitably made to share. In other words, the image displayed turns into private thought.

The addition of Fuseli's *Nightmare* to Kleist's novella is an example of visual insertion. Rohmer, however, also makes one minor but meaningful verbal addition to the text. The director assigns a brand-new line to a female servant who orders the handsome coachman Leopardo to fetch a sleeping potion for the Marquise. Critics have remarked that the introduction of this device in the narrative is meant to free Giulietta of any suspicion of "cognitive duplicity"[19] in regard to her pregnancy. By entrusting the Marquise to the embrace of Morpheus, Rohmer can push her state of inner division to an extreme: the erotic swoon she experiences while asleep remains totally unknown to her, even though the drives of the id pierce the surface of her very proper behavior. It remains unclear, for example, why she is so eager to thank the Count the morning after her rescue, or why she feels her father should have stopped the Count from leaving again after his sudden reappearance. Second thoughts and psychic evasion, hidden feelings and half-understood motives clearly inhabit her attitude of restraint and submission. Still, the device of the sleeping potion allows Rohmer to displace the question of the Marquise's subconscious motivation, the more to emphasize the challenge of taking responsibility for her own predicament in full consciousness. In a sense, the Marquise's announcement in the newspaper, which follows her decision to devote herself totally to the care of her children, is an extreme act of courage, even of arrogance. Thus, with his attention equally divided between the conflicting levels of consciousness and the unconscious, between reason and emotion, Rohmer balances the insights of the *moraliste* with those of the psychoanalyst.

Another interpretation of the sleeping potion is also possible. As she requests some opium tea, the female servant speaks her lines in voice-off. Her absence from the visual field makes it more apparent that these words are external to the literary source. In a sense, the auxiliary but also quite marginal role of the female servant is comparable to the peculiar position of the director. While Kleist seems to delight in the absurd flavor of his tale because it exposes the hypocrisy of social norms and the contradictions of individual actions, Rohmer concentrates on the strength of character it takes to accept the irrational. With the introduction of the voice-off and the sleeping potion, which free the Marquise of any taint of complicity, Rohmer fully dramatizes the clash between ineffective explanations based on reason and conduct moved by faith toward the gift of divine grace.

Beyond the boundaries of this episode, the equivalence between directing a film and supplying

others' wants continues to define the unobtrusive nature of Rohmer's adaptation. Anonymous servants take care of the major characters by handing them letters and newspapers, lighting candles, announcing guests, guarding gates. These nameless figures are stand-ins for Rohmer, who never fails to stage Kleist's short, quick sentences about the flow of minute, apparently insignificant events. The metaphor of adaptation as rape is further confirmed by how Rohmer steps into the shoes, so to speak, of Leopardo, the servant whom the mother temporarily blames for her daughter's pregnancy. Indeed, Leopardo's tall, wide-brimmed hat does resemble the Count's, and, as if this detail were not enough, Rohmer adds a third, microscopic change to Kleist's text: a shot of Leopardo staring at Giulietta in the cellar, right after her rescue.

In short, the fact that Leopardo enables Rohmer to bring the sleeping potion to the Marquise and that the suspicion of the rape hangs over him brings back full circle the analogy between adaptation and rape. Finally, the association between Rohmer and the servants reverberates in the director's cameo appearance as a Russian military officer who stands by a huge map spread on a table while the Count answers questions about his soldiers' assault on Giulietta. For Rohmer, Kleist's text is a map of actions which he understands as intimately as the servants know each corner of the house where they quietly work.

Pictorial, Architectural, and Filmic Space

In discussing Murnau's *Faust*, Rohmer distinguished among pictorial, architectural, and filmic spaces. The adoption of these levels of organization in *The Marquise of O* confirms that for Rohmer the cinema is an art of space. This is not to say that the director ignores the temporal markers of Kleist's novella, which he faithfully visualizes through a series of title cards. Furthermore, Rohmer's adaptation respects Kleist's split temporal structure: an explanatory flashback leading up to Giulietta's decision to search for her child's father, and the family's anxious wait for the solution of a mystery which has been all along an open secret for the audience. Finally, the emotional pace of the film is based on the progression of Giulietta's pregnancy. Yet *The Marquise of O* is not a story about the power of memory, but one about the meaning of locations. Having been raped while asleep, the Marquise has nothing to remember but everything to decide in regard to the Count's entrance into her family space.

Rohmer's interest in space over time fits within his project to create a cinema whose painterly approach can achieve the conceptual refinements of the verbal arts. It is also true, however, that Rohmer's sparing use of camera movements and his preference for static shots have earned him the label of "theatrical." Yet it is the theatricality or the dramatic compositions of classic figurative painting, and not of the theater, that Rohmer adopts to stage Kleist's text.

Rohmer's paradigm of cinema-space-painting-introspection emerges from some observations about the theater that the director published in *La Revue du Cinéma* in 1948:

> The very nature of the screen—a completely filled rectangular space occupying a relatively small portion of one's visual field—encourages a plasticity of gesture very different from what we are used to seeing on stage. For example, the arm movement common to an opera singer . . . is more easily justified in theatrical space, which is at once *fixed* and *undefined*, than inside a rectangle whose edges are clearly indicated and that only *provisionally circumscribes a variably wide portion* of the surface where the action takes place.[20]

By concluding that "compared with the theatrical space, cinematic space would thus be defined by the narrowness of its visual surface and by the breadth of its place of action,"[21] Rohmer suggests that in film, much more than in theater, painting can interact with the plasticity of the screen to make actions breathe with the actors' thoughts.

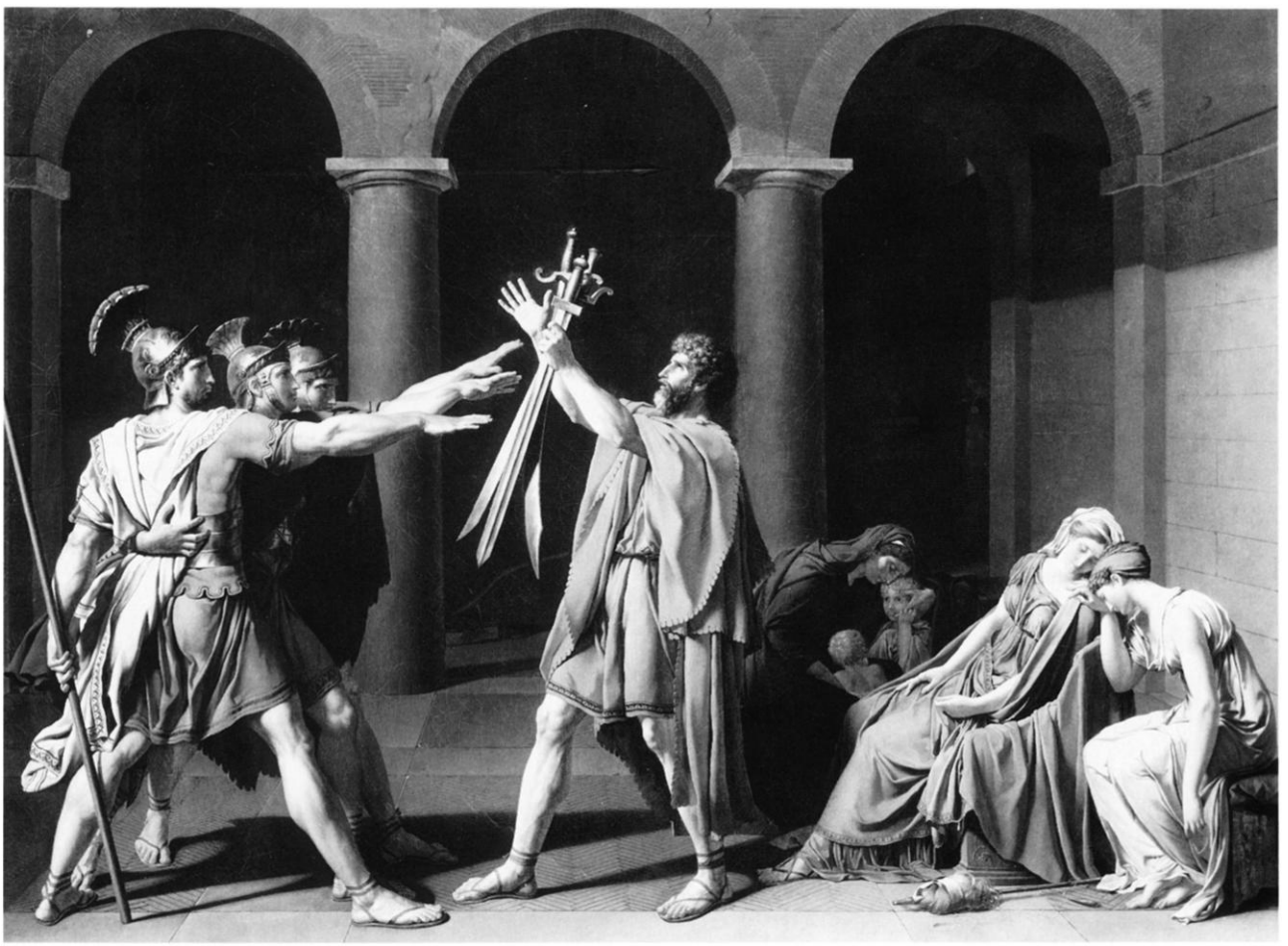
Rohmer's inclination toward painting is not symptomatic of a museological obsession. Without ever falling into the cliché of the tableau vivant, Rohmer in *The Marquise of O* relies on the visual register to fulfill Bazin's definition of painting as a "window onto the world of a space oriented toward an interior dimension only."[22] In mirroring Kleist's word, Rohmer's pictorial screen is indeed the

Bazinian window—an idea the director evokes again in one of his most telling statements on space in painting from "Le Celluloid et le marbre":

> The frame of a painting constitutes an area of disorientation in space. A frame juxtaposes a space oriented inward, a field of reflection open only inside the painting, to the space of nature and our active experience which sets the marks of its external limits. . . . [23]

Painting for Bazin is a landscape of the mind; likewise, Rohmer's choice of pictorial sources for *The Marquise of O* is meant to reproduce the period's conception of itself,[24] its inner image, and thus reflect the issues of self-discovery and self-acceptance confronted by the characters.

In keeping with the temporal framework of the novella, Rohmer's art-historical allusions tap the hybrid territory between the postrevolutionary, neoclassical style and the protoromantic sensibility of the late Enlightenment. The measured actions of the characters, their unspoken belief in civic virtues, and their simple way of life produce a stoic aura that is reminiscent of Jacques-Louis David's appreciation of the lessons of antiquity for the ethics of newly born Republican France. Yet, in David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1786), male camaraderie and courage are juxtaposed with female piety and suffering. Using a similar contrast of reason and emotion, the pure lines of Rohmer's mise-en-scène vibrate with emotional pressure, as if the smoothness of their surfaces were nothing but a social convention challenged by the same intensity we sense underneath David's classical forms. Furthermore, just as the pictorial space of the *Oath* is divided according to gender, so it is in the household of the Marquise: mother always sits with daughter, and father with son. Only at the very end of the film will the Count and



Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (1786)

Giulietta share the same seat, and with it an understanding of the mistakes they made about themselves and each other.

Finally, as a result of Rohmer's belief that painting in film must surface through acting (which is to say, through both the world and the theater, space and reality), David's portraits provide the poses and objects Rohmer needs for the depiction of Giulietta and her mother. For instance, the Marquise's headband and the furniture in her room during the doctor's visit recall David's *Madame Recamier* (1800). For a touch of color, emotion, or desire, Giulietta and her mother punctuate their simple clothing with a shawl, a long scarf, or a corset with a few, loose straps. Here Rohmer's actresses bring to life David's *Elisabeth Bonaparte* and his *Madame de Servan* (dates unknown).

Still, Rohmer is a French film-maker directing German actors, so that the Napoleonic exuberance of David's portraiture is toned down by some references to an early nineteenth-century "Flemish" Romantic, Georg Friedrich Kersting, whose domestic scenes with women working in silence by themselves (*Young Woman Sewing by Lamplight*, 1828), or with whispering couples (*Couple at the Window*, 1817), remind us that the politics of adaptation in *The Marquise of O* are bound to overlay French with German sources.

In addition to David's celebration of ancient history, Jean-Baptiste Greuze's scenes of domestic conflict (*The Paternal Curse*, 1777–78, and *The Punished Son,* 1778) inspire Rohmer's rendering of both the conflict between father and daughter and Giulietta's impulsive rejection of the Count after his admission of guilt. Outstretched arms, fainting, pleading, messages of ultimatum, and slammed doors lean dangerously toward either the tragic or the comic. Rohmer's characters, however, never slide into irony or parody because they are sincere in what they feel or believe, even though social rules prevent them from revealing their darkest emotions or expressing their most secret doubts. Despite their overcivilized, stiff manner, they never completely identify with their public roles in the same way as, for instance, the members of Goya's *The Family of Charles IV* (1800), with their extreme shrinking into an empty facade. The lives of Rohmer's characters, in fact, are punctuated by neoclassical busts, columns, statuettes, plasters. These decorative objects are there to remind them of how they are supposed to behave, while making even wider the gap between ideal and reality, duty and impulse.

Greuze's blend of tones earned the approval of Diderot, who found the painter's view of bourgeois life most sentimental, to be sure, but also pedagogically useful, especially after the immoralities and frivolities of Boucher's mythological allegories and Fragonard's rococo seductions. For Diderot, Greuze's display of emotion was at the service of a neoclassical program of moral edification, since the painter's yes-and-no gestures were performed by characters modeled on classical statuary and on Hellenistic examples of lucid action and ennobling pathos worthy of a canvas by David.[25]

The extensive use of David's and Greuze's paintings by Rohmer calls attention to the moral norms by which Giulietta and her relatives live. On the other hand, some references to Fragonard point to the passions that also exist under the innocent surface of family mores. Right before the rape, Giulietta's dazzling white gown glows in the darkness (thanks to Nestor Almendros's skillful lighting); next morning, however, when the Marquise and her father reunite, Giulietta's white figure seems to sink into an intense red curtain whose prominence recalls a similar set design from Fragonard's *The Bolt* (1780). But in the painting, the disorder of the bed, a general atmosphere of negligence and secrecy, and the voluptuousness of the folds in the red curtain suggest what is about to happen after the locking of the door. Thus Rohmer's allusion to Fragonard endows the embrace between father and daughter with incestuous connotations. Although this interpretation finds additional support in the father's unreasonable opposition to the Count's proposal of marriage, Rohmer avoids too mechanical a rendition of an Electra complex, preferring to measure the father's and the daughter's incestuous behavior against the viewers' right to sit in judgment. Using the device of a scene viewed through a keyhole—the mother peeps through it on her nightly tour of the house—Rohmer establishes a contrast between a rape which is not seen and an embrace between father and daughter which is shown in all its affection.

Furthermore, in embracing his daughter and saying, "I had to surrender, but my honor is safe," the father initiates the parallel between war and love which is also at the heart of Fragonard's *Storming the Citadel* (1771). In this painting, a gallant suitor

Fragonard's
Storming the Citadel (1771)

climbs over a wall to reach his beloved in the privacy of a garden, echoing the Count's violation of the boundaries of the Marquise's estate. While Fragonard provides the iconography for Rohmer's depiction of the Count chasing the Marquise in her villa, the airy lighting and the open space which envelope Giulietta are reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's *Garden Terrace* (1811–1812), where a woman reads alone under a tree in a property surrounded by a wall. Once again, in a French film based on a German novella, French sources exist next to German ones.

The pictorial allusions in the film reinforce the polarities of classical control and melodramatic expression, polite manners and illicit love. This dualistic approach also justifies Rohmer's use of Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, for this is the painting which any standard survey of the history of art will cite to call attention to the founding dichotomy of the Napoleonic era—namely, an obscure feeling of unrest growing underneath the call to public morality. While Fuseli serves as lustful foil to post-revolutionary austerity, Delacroix, one of the most Byronic of romantic painters, is the unexpected source of a neoclassical outline. In fact, Rohmer refashions the sensuous profile of a female slave in *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1826) into a tense, curved pose that conveys the desperation of Giulietta's struggle against the Russian soldiers.[26]

The effects of Fuseli's restless sleep reappear in the characters' anxious wandering from location to location: the daughter and the mother travel to and fro between the father's house and the country estate; the son shuttles between his parents' quarters and his sister's rooms, and, toward the end of the film, returns to the inn where we had first encountered him; the Count is a Russian who speaks in German, fights in Italy, looks like David's portrait of Napoleon, and travels between Constantinopole and Naples, and between Naples and Saint Petersburg. All these journeys are movements of the soul. The psychological meaning of so many changes in location, however, acquires relief thanks to Rohmer's downplaying of the outside world. We never see aspects of the town surrounding the Marquise's family. By contrast, inside Giulietta's house, the "carefully groomed and quarantined suburban spaces (gardens, parlors, vestibules, bedchambers, and dining rooms)"[27] hide a storm of feelings whose power can be seen in the overturned furniture we glimpse at a moment of crisis: the father resents the Count's conquest of the citadel and of his daughter; the mother is torn between condemning a pregnancy out of wedlock and hoping that her widowed daughter will remarry; the Marquise is attracted to the Count but does not want to admit it.

Rohmer's images make visible the invisible. In comparison to the rest of her family, the Marquise, who undergoes the most intense degree of stress, speaks very little. But despite her silence, her thoughts are not concealed; she conveys them when we see her holding a paintbrush in mid-air, pacing her room with a small book in her hand, doing a little embroidery, or sitting in her garden in a halo of light. These moments of silent reflection and psychological intimacy are made most eloquent by the absence of music—an art form which, for Rohmer, combines the abstractions of literature and the sensuousness of the visual arts and which he consistently leaves out of his films in order to push to an extreme the dialectic of word and image, to underscore his use of painting as inner speech and of the word as theatrical prop. In *The Marquise of O*, the absence of music not only facilitates the linking of the word to the eye and of the image to the ear but also produces an espe-

Passion and restraint: The Count (Bruno Ganz) and the Marquise

cially active role for the spectator, who is asked to fill in what is open or empty. In Giulietta's house, a huge but always silent harp tunes us to the sounds of the characters' thoughts.

Rohmer's emphasis on space makes the story seem to grow out of the architecture and decor of the house. Different kinds of seats—*bergère, dagobert, recamier*—record subtle changes in atmosphere. Frequent, boxlike shots of corridors, doors, gates, windows, and walls set in motion a dynamic of open and closed, stable and fluid spaces, leading the viewer to wonder whether situations are about to resolve themselves or to become more complicated. In particular, the viewer's expectations or doubts are channeled across corridors or echoed by glimpses of larger rooms behind alcoves, door frames, and curtains. The mother has to get through a gate to reach Giulietta in the estate, while the Count and the Marquise, and the Marquise and her father are always separated by walls and doors.

Rohmer's architectural space is an abstract region where decorative elements do not seem to have much weight, while surfaces of pure colors—white, light blue, dark reds and dark greens, black and some gold—produce a pattern reminiscent of a canvas by Mondrian.[28] The characters' indecision and changes of mind ring against a grid of colors that is as rational and clear as a theorem, while the partitions of space turn into overlapping lines of thought and dialogue. By avoiding the subjective point-of-view shot, Rohmer shoots entire conversations from the outside. By refusing to step into the mental space of a character, he allows external changes in space to mark meaningful shifts in relationships that occur behind the surface behavior. Rohmer's geometry of the word makes us aware, for example, that the Count's visit to his family, shortly after the rape, is characterized by shifts between at least three perspectives: the conversation he conducts with his father; the exchange of looks he initiates with the rest of the family; and the family members' reactions to each other as they listen to the Count and his father speak.

The filmic space of *The Marquise of O* is characterized by such austerity that the very few movements of the camera acquire undeniable significance, if not deep emotional resonance. Rohmer mostly remains on the edges of the action; the nuances of the word orient and design the image from within. Yet two camera movements in particular achieve a mixed effect of visual and mental expansion. Horizontal pans and tracking shots are usually linked to the surface of family routines and societal norms, while vertical movements stand out for their intensity. The camera, for example, follows the Count and Giulietta down a narrow staircase into the cellar shortly after the attempted rape. This downward motion haunts the rest of the film: it accompanies the Count to Giulietta's bed during his nocturnal visit, thus measuring the abyss of his violence. It follows Giulietta as she walks down the stairs in her home, when she begins to entertain the first suspicions that she is pregnant. The vertical movement of the camera also outlines the handsome back of Leopardo, the coachman, to whom Giulietta and her mother, in a moment of light-heartedness, are attracted. Finally, during the wedding ceremony, Giulietta's gaze scans the vertical composition of a huge, baroque canvas depicting Lucifer's fall from Heaven. The most beautiful of angels turns into the most terrible of devils. But human beings, the Marquise has come to realize, have a nature in which good and evil are mixed; she begins to understand the limits of one-sided self-righteousness.

The dualistic nature of the Count may be seen as a metaphor for Rohmer's artful naturalness in his cinema. More than once, Rohmer has defined himself as an "auteur-in-absentia," or a director whose signature springs from the effort to erase style as embellishment, vanity, and self-love. Rohmer's commitment to humility also explains his rejection of modernist abstract art, where the subject is not the world seen but the artist's performance. This view of nonrepresentational modern painting takes us back to the Count's lustful thoughts as he watches the Marquise sleep. In fact, an equally sinful moment seems to emerge from Rohmer's own words when he describes his response to Matisse:

> . . . through the channel of the eyes, a drug was getting inside of me; a charm as irresistible as that of a musical phrase was taking me over; I was moving toward the highest, most violent pleasure which could be offered to sight; I was understanding, approving the uncontrolled pride of the modern painter, our religion of the trait, the touch, the signature. . . . But already, during the most intense stage of contemplation, a doubt was rising in my mind, not of the quality of

> this pleasure, but of the purity of my gaze: Was it innocently looking at the naked work? Wasn't it dwelling rather on the thick web which links this painting to a hundred thousand others by the same painter, by his contemporaries and predecessors? I thought I was appreciating as a connoisseur, yet I was admiring as a scholar. In fact, how could an innocent eye have been able to evaluate that painting? Probably it would have only seen in it infantilism and savagery.[29]

Here the impure primitivism of Matisse becomes the other side of the lustful thinking linked to Fuseli, and the dichotomy also points to the duality at the heart of Rohmer's method: painting as tableau with a classic conception, and painting as the cinematic "plan-tableau" based on Fuseli, where the spatial coincidence of painterly frame and cinematic framing guarantees the seamless conjunction of two distinct objects, screen and canvas, into an image as double-sided as the Count.

Pictorial allusions proliferate in *The Marquise of O*, but instead of thickening the image they make it lighter and simultaneously enrich it with the subtlest psychological nuances. Thus Rohmer, who condemns the arrogance of the nonrepresentational modernist art of Matisse, paradoxically works like an abstract painter: he achieves pictorialism by transforming painting into what cannot be seen, although it is spatially experienced or felt in the acting style, the use of colors, the architectural detail. On the other hand, it is as if the attributes of painting—shade, shape, size, and coloring—had been transferred to language. This displacement echoes the repression of painting as emotion and as a sensual sight, while painting itself reappears in the form of a pulsing logos, in clear contrast to the cool rationality of verbal wit. Rohmer relies on architecture to transform the screen into a mental space and on the theater to link it to the world outside through the mediation of the actors, living reminders of the pro-filmic event. Between these two extreme polarities of the world seen and of the thinking mind, Rohmer's cinematic style becomes as transparent as unstaged reality, the screen fades away, and the director disappears, leaving us, the viewers, with this reward for encountering painting in Rohmer's cinema: the pleasure of feeling through thought and a renewed level of visual attention toward what surrounds us.

■ Angela Dalle Vacche teaches at Yale University. Her most recent book is *The Body in the Mirror* (Princeton University Press, 1992).

Notes

1. Matthew Arnold, as cited in Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne and the Visual Arts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 59.
2. Aldo Tassone, "Incontro con Eric Rohmer," in *Eric Rohmer, Un hommage du Centre Culturel Français de Turin* (Milan: Fabbri, 1988), p. 16.
3. Eric Rohmer, *L'Organization de l'espace dans le* Faust *de Murnau* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977), p. 17.
4. C. G. Crisp, *Eric Rohmer: Realist and Moralist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 4.
5. Jacques Aumont, "Les couleurs et le goût," in *Eric Rohmer, Un hommage*, pp. 51–62.
6. C. G. Crisp, *Eric Rohmer*, p. 12. The statement first appeared in *Amis du film et de la télévision*, no. 178 (March 1971).
7. James Monaco, *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 292.
8. Robert Hammond and Jean-Pierre Pagliano, "Eric Rohmer on Film Scripts and Film Plans," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1982), p. 223.
9. C. G. Crisp, *Eric Rohmer*, p. 2.
10. Ibid., p. 3.
11. Roger Hazelton, *Blaise Pascal: The Genius of His Thought* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 125.
12. Ibid., p. 134.
13. C. G. Crisp, *Eric Rohmer*, p. 5.
14. Robert Hammond and Jean-Pierre Pagliano, "Eric Rohmer on Film Scripts . . . ," p. 211.
15. One possible source for the representation of Giulietta as a painter is Constance Marie Charpentier's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Charlotte du Val d'Ognes* (date unknown), where a woman in a high-waisted neoclassical gown sits by a window with a canvas on her lap while a pristine light floods the room. Very little is known about Charpentier, who was probably a student of David, or the circumstances and the meaning of this beautiful painting, which, however, captures the atmosphere of the encounter between mother and daughter in an indoor scene like the one Rohmer stages on the Marquise's estate. On this hypothesis, see Victoria Sullivan, "*The Marquise of O:* Rohmer Changes his Erotic Formula," *Wide Angle*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1977), pp. 61–63. Most helpful on the relation between cinema and painting are the footnotes of Alan Spiegel, "Critical Afterword," in *The Marquise of O: Film by Eric Rohmer, Novella by Heinrich von Kleist* (New York: Ungar, 1985), pp. 125–136.

16. Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Marquise von O...*, in *Erzählungen* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1970), p. 95. All translations are mine.
17. About this painting, see Nicolas Powell, *Fuseli: The Nightmare* (New York: Viking, 1972).
18. Pascal Bonitzer, *Décadrages: Cinéma et peinture* (Paris: Editions de l'Etoile, 1985), pp. 31–32.
19. Hildburg Herbst, "Coloring Word: Rohmer's Film Adaptation of Kleist's Novella *The Marquise of O*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3 (1988), p. 204.
20. Eric Rohmer, *The Taste for Beauty*, trans Carol Volk (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 21. Emphasis mine.
21. Ibid., p. 19.
22. J. Gerlacn, "Rohmer, Kleist, and *The Marquise of O . . .*," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1980), p. 90.
23. Giovanna Grignaffini, *La Pelle e l'Anima, Intorno alla Nouvelle Vague* (Florence: La Casa di Usher, 1984), p. 43.
24. Edith Borchardt, "Eric Rohmer's *Marquise of O* and the Theory of the German Novella," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1984), p. 134, n. 2.
25. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
26. Alan Spiegel, "Critical Afterword," p. 136.
27. Ibid., p. 125.
28. On color, Eric Rohmer writes: "Modern painting's great idea is to have given color a life of its own, or at least to have made it the absolute ruler of the canvas, the supreme value." *The Taste for Beauty*, p. 69.
29. Eric Rohmer, "Le Siècle des peintres," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, vol. 9, no. 49 (July 1955), pp. 12–13.

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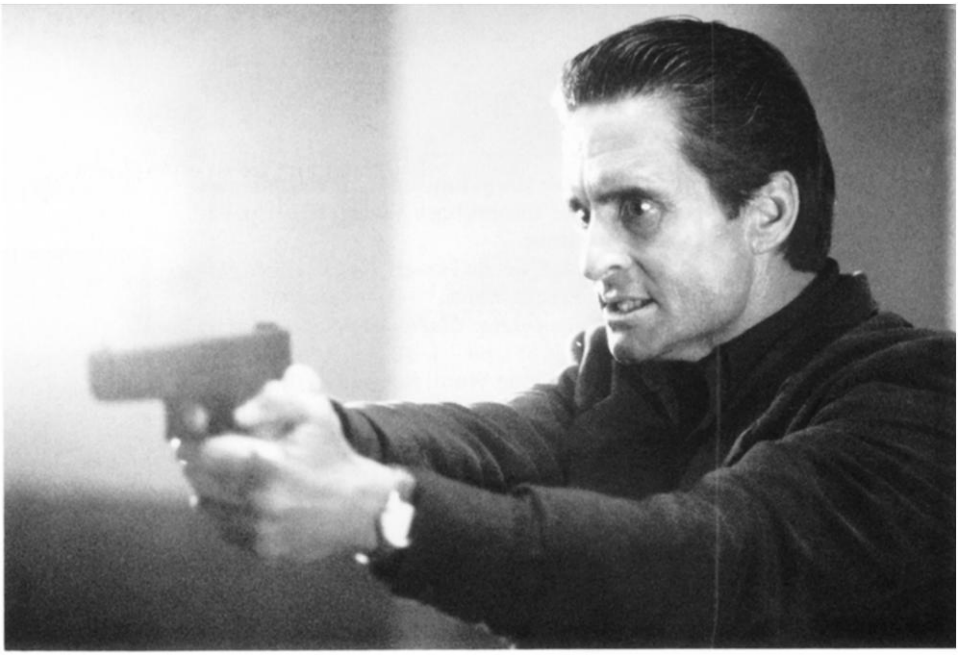


Basic Instinct:
Michael Douglas

Devin McKinney

Violence: The Strong and the Weak

For many of us, our earliest and most lasting moviegoing memories involve acts of violence. Whereas an older generation was marked by the murder of Bambi's mother, my epiphany came with seeing *Taxi Driver* at the age of 12 and being disturbed nearly to the point of physical sickness by its violence. But more intriguing to me now is the nightmare I awoke with two days later. Somewhere I realized that I had responded so viscerally not only because the violence felt physically real but because it was emotionally and morally complex: it brought up ambivalences and dreads that no amount of rationalization could overcome.

Time swings like a pendulum, and violence is once again an issue. Over the past few years a new ethos of violence has been accruing in the commercial cinema; directors have been attempting to take it further—but not necessarily deeper. More than ever, violence has emerged as thematic matter, the true meat even of movies that claim to be about something else. This has given a sharper edge to both "strong" and "weak" (as I'll call them) portrayals of violence, since both must compete in a media marketplace that is ever more vicious and in a social context that is ever more apathetic.

Of all that films contain, violence may be the most resistant to quantification. Only at its weakest does it yield to patterns and predictabilities. (Robin Wood conceded as much in his theory of the "incoherent text," a theory whose unvoiced admission is that many of the most violent and interesting films are so multi-layered and resistant to singular meaning that their systematization can be built only on contradictions.) But perhaps some generalities can be discerned. Perhaps movie violence must contain multitudinous meanings if it hopes to avoid the prisons of ideology and cliché, if it seeks to draw anything more than a distant, formalized response, if it wants to outlast its moment. Perhaps it must bring the heart and mind together, and aim for the emotions as much as the viscera. And perhaps in order to entertain a discussion of "strong" violence

versus "weak" violence, one has to accept the notion that some nightmares are worth having.

In an essay on "excessive" film types (weepie melodrama, pornography, horror), Linda Williams determined that essential to the allure of these "body" genres is their capacity to bring up unmitigated, unsocialized emotions—the extremes of feeling not elicited by pictures that take the straight and narrow path. Strong violence, while it often has the physical effect of the body genres, also acts on the mind by refusing it glib comfort and immediate resolutions. If successful socialization depends on a neutralizing of extremes, then violence of this kind amounts to a rent in the curtain of rationality, a glimpse of the ultimate questions one spends a lifetime denying. And it amounts to carnage that is haunting in the truest sense—that gives "meaning and import to our mortal twitchings," in Vivian Sobchack's fine phrase. This is a rarity on today's screen, but it shows up just often enough to make you feel its larger absence. It's the sort of violence that *Wild at Heart* pulsed with, that framed the good small thriller *One False Move*, and that Scorsese, despite the unwelcome gloss twinkling on his late work, can still deliver. It was the violence, not the time-saving homilies about fallen kings, that gave *JFK* its sense of loss. And it carried the climactic murder in *Casualties of War*, so surreally angled, to the level of catharsis.

Movie violence this strong communicates intensely the sense that a person who in one moment is fully alive has been reduced to God's garbage (as Joseph Heller perceived his doomed gunner, Snowden). It holds unspoken contingencies, and by its nature is crazed. It need not be particularly kinetic, but it shakes everything up, reforming the entire fictive environment around itself.

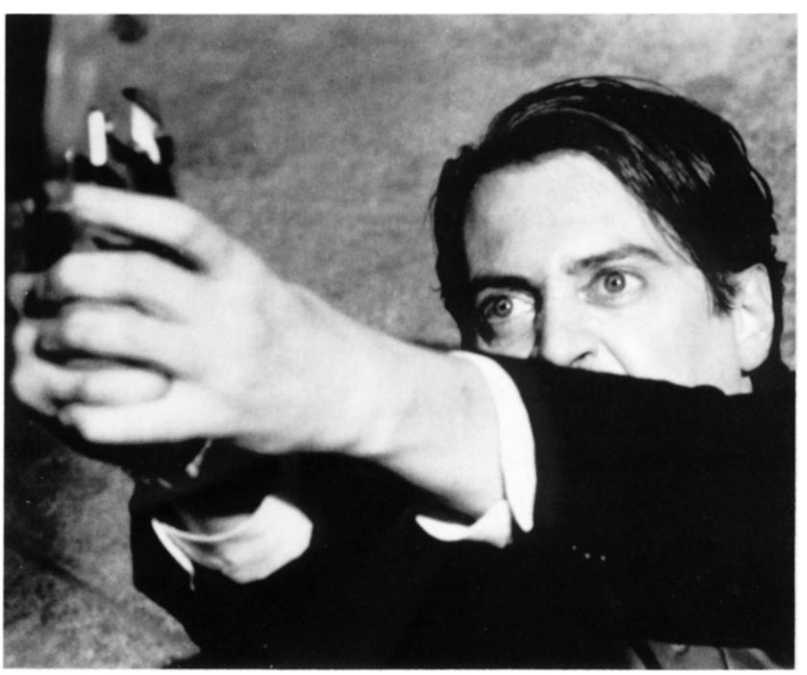
Plainly the terrain mapped here is not an easy place to reach. Among recent films there are three in particular that in their impact—both immediate and residual—make the discrimination between strong and weak violence solid and meaningful. In each, the bloodshed has subtext, carries the weight of fear and mystery, and is piercing enough to shoot past the crap violence we all drink like beer.

If Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* fits the present discussion, it isn't because its violence is plentiful or showy but because it exemplifies how strong violence can reshape both the entire context of a narrative and the audience's enunciation of the experience. The deaths that occur in this picture mark beginnings as well as endings, and open a world of new threats and possibilities. The nasty trick of fate that ends the life of a British soldier (Forest Whitaker) signals the beginning of a new life for his captor, an IRA terrorist (Stephen Rea), as does the murder committed by the Irishman's lover (Jaye Davidson) later on. In each case, violence is *committed*—as most movie violence is not—because it demands commitments of those still living.

This does not square with the conventions of movie violence, where the cataclysm of death constitutes no more than a momentary lull ending with a cutaway to the next sequence. Although stylistically well within a certain classical-realist tradition, *The Crying Game* breaks those bounds on the narrative level by according the consequences of violence a determining role. As much as anything, it is this grasp of consequence that distinguishes strong violence from weak.

The emotions we are enabled to feel by *The Crying Game* are ultimately comforting, affirmative, even warm—in the non-ironic senses of those words. This does not, of course, detract from the film (whose warmth, in fact, is as central as its violence), but it does point out that strong violence is often put to the service of perceptions that are ugly and cold, and that it often etches a horrid picture. Abel Ferrara's savage cop movie, *Bad Lieutenant,* swan-dives into the waste of the excremental city, and whatever sympathy one extends to its eponymous antihero is repaid only after a punishing swim.

Reservoir Dogs: Steve Buscemi



Ferrara pursues the new, riskier violence in every respect, pushing a rigorous cum-stained filthiness against the keening excess of grand opera: the result is a Times Square men's room with the design of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Harvey Keitel's doping, whoring, extorting L.T. is the film's center, and its metaphor: he is a walking, talking consequence. *Bad Lieutenant* is so single-minded and so steeped in the ubiquity of brutality that its violences come to feel organic to one another—symbolically, if not actually, intertwined. The L.T.'s act of autoeroticism—aided by two frightened girls in a car—echoes and counters the event that spurs his death-trip to redemption: the rape and vaginal mutilation of a nun by two boys. The skein of suggestions underlying these disparate acts of violence—active and passive subjugation of women, the priming of the male pump versus the attempted destruction of the female organ—is tight and intricate, with no vanishing point. That such echoes are heard at all implies that the film has deepened its grotesquerie by problematizing it, making it stand for more than a scream and a crotch shot.

And as relentless as it is, *Bad Lieutenant* has plenty of color; it's lined with rock and roll; it moves. Other films don't. On one level, John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* can be denigrated as a slack, unmodulated piece of film-making. But the truth of this judgment also underlines the fact that strong violence (like the features of Williams' "excessive" genres) is not always an experience defensible or divisible by aesthetic means. For though it may fail as an art object, *Henry* can't be dismissed.

Its tonelessness and sensual inertia apotheosize the particularly cruel, moribund tenor of violence in the 1980s. But unlike *American Psycho,* Bret Easton Ellis's portrait of a serial killer, *Henry* does not commit the imitative fallacy of depicting a barren mind through the barren accumulation of idiot minutiae, mistaking a willed emptiness for postmodern substance. It stands at just the right distance from its

Practicing violence: Michael Rooker (left) and director John McNaughton on the set of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*

subject, never enforcing a sociologically judgmental thesis but nevertheless entailing that the killings be as grubbily, unexplosively real as kitchen-sink style can make them.

Perhaps the indirect success of *Henry* as a study in violence is that it comes to life only when witnessing death, and even then it comes only to a kind of life. The banality of its violence issues from a beclouding feeling of moral lassitude. There is a grinding insistence on murder as a mere relief of tension, a dully masturbatory act, and it infuses even the nonviolent scenes with a glowering menace. The life seen here is entirely of a piece with the death: there is no "real world," no normality to return to. What this means in practice is that although the presentation of violence is outwardly neutral, its effect is extreme. Unlike the common run of hermetic, low-budget bloodbaths, *Henry* puts its banality to a purpose. Its very monotony induces paranoia, hypersensitivity to what was once ordinary. Like all works of strong violence, it leaves an audience feeling dead inside, yet, somehow, more alive than it was two hours before.

The kind of disconnected, uncommitted movie mayhem that began with James Bond, came of age with the sociopathic crime dramas of the early 1970s and served the reactionary agenda of the 1980s is once again ascendant. The increasingly visible violence of the global society virtually demands that its art be more violent, and already all the barricades seem to have been breached, no crimes left undepicted. But repetition always vitiates, particularly if it's the lowest-common-denominator variety habitually practiced by the movie industry. The paradoxes of strong violence are rich and mazelike, but weak violence thrives on a sterile contradiction: it reduces bloodshed to its barest components, then inflates them with hot, stylized air.

Weak violence appears nearly everywhere in both popular and highbrow culture, and by its nature ridicules the powerful empathies that hard, personalized violence can make an audience feel. It's akin to what has been called camp, and it recalls John Fraser's account (in his touchstone work, *Violence in the Arts*) of camp aesthetics "draining off" the "charge of feeling and meaning" possible in a violent artwork. It informs not only the products of the Schwarzenegger school—which are merely bionic mutations of earlier action styles—but also works of some moment: Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*; parts of *GoodFellas*; Pedro Almodóvar's post-commercial-breakthrough films; David Cronenberg's adaptation of *Naked Lunch*; much of Alan Parker's work; the French blockbuster *La Femme Nikita*. The violence of these pictures simply doesn't last; it gets left on the floor with the candy wrappers. It's too rationalized, too articulate—either in the limited sense of "nice" cinematic effects too well contrived to have any other content, or because the outrages are stapled, memo-like, to external signifiers that bury their very peculiar meanings. Either way, violence is used only as a device: something a crowd pays for when it goes in, but not when it comes out.

Although weak violence is marked by its lack of pluralities, the sensibilities that create it are various. Among the hacks of the world it is still the most popular pipeline to grim titillation, as witness Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct*. In building a dream world whose moral parameters are so easily drawn (straight = good, gay or bi = evil), Joe Eszterhas's screenplay abdicates any claim on psychological insight, and the director's angle on violence is a congruent refusal to believe that anything might be more than it appears. Like his demonized *femme fatale*, Verhoeven wields an ice-pick—in the form

Basic Instinct: Sharon Stone

of visual violence—and he uses it to pin his characters to the mat. Significantly, no pictorial reference is made to the accidental murders gratuitously committed by the hero cop, while the brutalities of the central lesbian are virtually turned into production numbers. The characters are not revealed by their acts, only summarily defined, and violence is used not as an entrée to human depths but as a means of shutting them off.

But this sort of lacquered, discrete violence is no longer the exclusive province of the schlockmeisters. It also serves the needs of young, earnest filmmakers eager to showcase their formal skills, and who therefore seem worthier of considered attention because they're walking the art-house walk. A paradigmatic case is Phil Joanou's *State of Grace*, a fitfully impressive, high-voltage melodrama about the stubborn dregs of New York's Irish mob. The picture follows its bumpy, over-deliberate, but generally absorbing course until a climactic massacre that comes charging right out of the movie past, impeccably choreographed to evoke the shades of Travis Bickle and the Wild Bunch. Joanou's marshalling of time and space is voluptuous and breathtaking, but the scene's brilliance is an affront. One is severed cleanly from the film's involving fiction—from a world where nearly everything seems real and vital to one where nothing does. Unlike the fierce, flatly observed throat-cutting earlier on, the bullets fired in this slow-motion shootout inflict no pain on a viewer; the blood-squibs explode with all the portent of popcorn.

Even more accomplished than *State of Grace* in its hollow treatment of violence is *Reservoir Dogs*, the debut of writer-director Quentin Tarantino. This high-gloss, low-budget job about the preparation for and disastrous fallout from a botched jewel heist is aggressively, conscientiously violent. In terms of perceptible intent, the tyro auteur seems involved in the playful crossbreeding of pop-culture references from the last three decades with his own witty, state-of-the-art thriller technique. But despite its conscious avoidance of "relevance"—all its backward glances and retrograde finery—*Reservoir Dogs* is a pristine reflection of its socio-artistic climate; this brutal exercise says much about the way we're absorbing violence today.

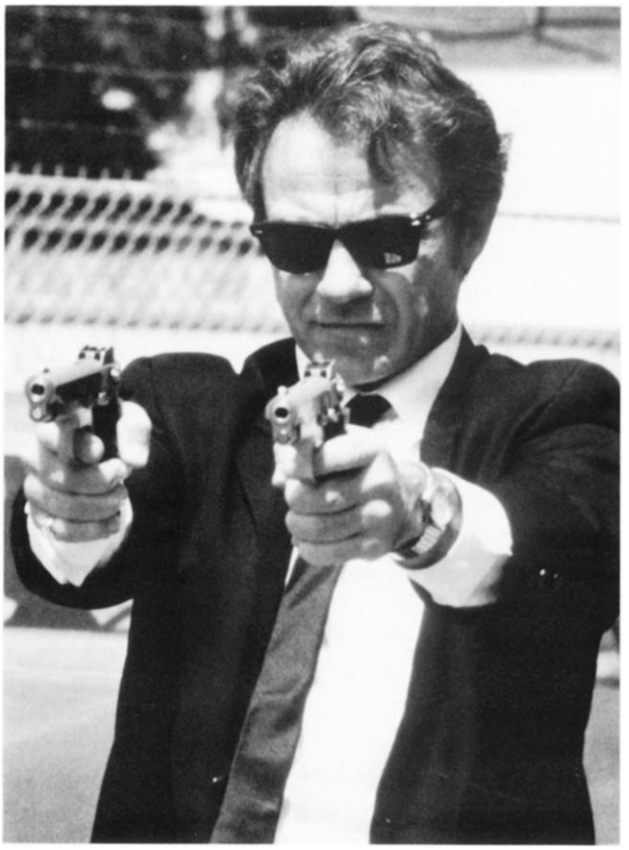
The picture's savagery is so assiduously appointed that it demands analysis as a thing in itself, a component of the work overarching all others—

Reservoir Dogs:
Steve Buscemi (left)
and Harvey Keitel

which is to say that the story usually serves the violence rather than the reverse. In theory, this is hardly a fatal flaw, and indeed, there is an initial passage whose strength leads one to expect that the subsequent violence will evolve into something more consummate. Speeding from the scene of the crime, the most psychologically complex of the thieves (Harvey Keitel) holds the hand of his friend (Tim Roth), who lies writhing in the back seat, slowly bleeding to death. The sequence is brought down to the tightly gripped hands and the strangled growls of the back-seat passenger. It doesn't have many levels, but it does have some, and above all the scene is obstinate—it sinks in; and this at least bodes well for Tarantino's willingness to allow the violence a lifelike rhythm and character. But when the crew of hoods congregates in a warehouse to lick its wounds, the picture relaxes into its oddball formula and, despite its blood and curses, turns quisling, watering its frenzy with self-satisfied cool.

The film proclaims itself to be a jaunty, hyperbolic comedy of horrors that aspires to no particular realism or social import. It occurs in a comic-existential dead zone, and is as nonreferential to a reality outside itself as a (theoretically) mimetic work can be. Initially, it requires a stretch to allow that a gang of robbers—and self-designated "professionals" at that—would think it clever to outfit themselves in identical Blues Brothers costumes, or to go by ostentatiously colorful code names like "Mr. Pink" and "Mr. Orange." But *Reservoir Dogs* has approximately the same relation to true crime as *Mandingo* had to life in the antebellum South. This is a formalist film-maker's logic, and it has only one self-apparent subject: the set piece.

The set piece that has drawn the most attention—perhaps because it draws the most attention to itself—is the one in which Mr. Blonde (Michael Madsen) gives the bloody business to a trussed-up policemen, all the while dancing the dance of the blissfully insane and swishing away with a razor to the accompaniment of a wonderful old Stealers Wheel tune. Although this may have seemed great on paper, the combination of pop music, self-infatuated dance, and offhand amputation inspires no clashing sensation in a viewer, perhaps because the incongruous ingredients are too obviously chosen for their effect of creative perversity. With every authorial impulse visible, the supposedly wild scene has an inapposite smoothness and objectivity, reinforced by a Formica-like sheen over the colors. When Blonde cuts off the cop's ear, it's not a determined act in any real sense but a show of flamboyance for its own hip, photogenic sake.



Reservoir Dogs: Harvey Keitel

Where does a scene like this locate the audience? What is a viewer's level and kind of complicity, if any? On the surface (which is where weak violence phenomenalistically stays), one identifies with neither the victimizer (the infantile Blonde) nor the victim (the objectified cop), and is thus put in the position of the most passive, disinterested of observers. This is the limbo that weak violence inhabits: empathies are not engaged, commitments are not brought to bear, ambivalences are not acknowledged, neutrality is the currency.

Strong violence enables—and often entails—shifts in one's moral positioning. This is a part of its power, and a great deal of its threat. In fact, the realm of violence is one of the few aspects of film that can be legitimately called co-constructive. Movies, despite the penis-envious treatises of aca-

demically oriented critics, offer the viewer no degree of imaginative co-authorship comparable to that in literature. The image, after all, is right there before us, concrete block-like in its sensual solidity, ranging in opacity from a stiff Eisenstein tableau to Eric Rohmer's airy idylls. But when acts of strong violence are involved, a picture can (like Garry Wills' comment on *Oliver Twist*) open moral trapdoors under us, engendering an immediate and very subjective confrontation with the material. The most memorable of Hitchcock's murder scenes, for instance (the *Psycho* shower murder and its aftermath, the slow killing of the German agent in *Torn Curtain*), are at once acts of pure calculation and spontaneous disruptions of rational order; the calculation courts the audience's desires and the disruption serves to foreground those (discomfiting) desires. The audience is both acted upon and made to act by acknowledging its role in the fulfillment of a wish it barely knew it had: it is both victimizer and victim.

The new exploiters of violence use bloodshed as a kick, but in an agile, knowing, and self-consciously formal way. Verhoeven's kinky, whorey thriller is tarted and rouged with Hitchcock allusions, while Mr. Blonde's torture of the cop is meant not to horrify but to succeed as a ghastly entertainment, a bloody song and dance. It's a clean kick, and guilt-free, too: it obviates a viewer's self-disgust at getting off on sadism by positing figures who are plasticized and unreal to begin with, lacking even a certain crude B-movie immediacy. The gut-wrench one feels at the parboiled savageries of a *Basic Instinct* bears the same relation to real emotional empathy as the tears provoked by one of Douglas Sirk's moist epics: a conditioned reflex. But without emotional response, film violence trades flesh and blood for hamburger and ketchup.

If a film makes the decision to be violent, it shouldn't go about its business timidly: no art ever came of a hedged bet. But most of the violent pictures that cross the screen these days, however dangerous they appear, are as conservative at heart as a Disney fable. These films hedge their bets on the level of audience involvement by refusing a full commitment to their own content: they want to look at horror, but they don't want to feel it, smell it, take the chance of getting sick from it. By insuring itself in this way, a violent film can't help but resist a viewer's emotional investment, which, frustrated, displaces itself onto an academic admiration of style.

This consideration of involvement, finally, is perhaps the most important. All the other issues—consequences, multiplicity of meaning, arousal of empathy—are united by the questions that measure how successfully a group of film artists have involved their audience in the experience of violence. Do I care about this character? Will his or her passing leave a gap? Will I remember what I've seen?

More and more, violence—not merely as an aspect of art but as an everyday presence—seems to come equipped with its own escape hatch, its own assurance that involvement can be avoided. Those who communicate violence in its varied forms are eager to provide the means by which the receptor can reify it into a construct, something not messy and uncontrollable but regimented, with the workable outlines of fiction. A currently popular example is the phenomenon of "reality television," which in its seamier modes is like a Marxist's nightmare of capitalist decadence, or the bottoming-out of what Guy DeBord called "the society of the spectacle." Desperate for new and exciting diversions, millions gather around images of real-life violence edited and rechannelled as entertainment, images either caught in the flesh by video cameras or reenacted by those whom the violence befell, complete with stage blood and stage screams. "You'll think you're watching a disaster movie," one such show promises, hawking its enticing miseries, "but it's real."

As the violence of the world, the country, the city, and the street crowd closer, threatening to collapse whatever peaceful center one has tried to maintain, the more one is tempted to seek insulation wherever it can be found. There is a politics to all of this—or to be precise, a non-politics—and it cloaks itself in the absolving cleanliness of denial. Movies that offer the queasy pleasures of violence half-baked contribute just as much to the process of insulation as the remote control that shuts off the nightly news. Today's average violent movie doesn't ask suffering from those already inclined to stand aloof from it; it exacts none but monetary payment. Which brings me back to my childhood nightmare. The reclamation of that same empathy and receptivity is a project as old as human history, and when a film artist makes us cry over spilt blood it can start to seem like the project is worth it.

■ Devin McKinney is a freelance writer living in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Review

Mississippi Masala

Director: Mira Nair. Producers: Michael Nozik and Mira Nair. Screenplay: Sooni Taraporevala. Cinematographer: Ed Lachman. Production designer: Mitch Epstein. Editor: Roberto Sivi. Music: L. Subramaniam. Samuel Goldwyn.

In *Mississippi Masala* (1991), director Mira Nair (*Salaam Bombay*, 1988) offers fresh images of people previously ignored, denigrated, or stereotyped by Hollywood. The film features people of color not as subordinates to white dominant culture but as central figures. European-American characters are only peripheral, and the leading characters are either Indian, African, or African-American. While Hollywood has recently produced several films centering on African-American characters, such as *Boyz N the Hood* and *New Jack City*, these movies are most often limited to a theme of gang life in the inner cities. *Mississippi Masala* is an enjoyable and vibrant film; it is hampered, however, by problematic characterizations of the Indian community and by the fact that its central subject, interracial romance, is upstaged by the story of a secondary character.

The story begins in Uganda, in 1972, with the expulsion of Asians by the Idi Amin government. Mina, a young East Indian girl, emigrates with her father, Jay, and mother, Kinnu, to Greenwood, Mississippi. And it picks up roughly 20 years later—Mina (played by Sarita Choudhury) is a shopping-cart-wielding, self-assured young woman adept at the ways of the Western world. She happens upon Demetrius—by rear-ending his van—and soon they fall in love. Demetrius (Denzel Washington) is an earnest, hard-working African-American man who has started a successful carpet-cleaning business. Mina and Demetrius begin a relationship that becomes sexual and public, much to the consternation of both sets of parents and the community, and changes the course of their lives and the lives of those around them.

The film's title originates from Mina's self-description as "masala," a mixture of spices used in Indian cooking. She uses this term in a conversation about her life experiences—an Indian woman, born in Uganda, having lived in England, settled in the United States, embarking on a relationship with an African American. She traverses the Indian and African-American cultures with a refreshing ease. She is close to her parents, and is an accepted member of the Indian community. She is also comfortable in the African world, as evidenced in Uganda

Interracial romance: Sarita Choudhury and Denzel Washington in *Mississippi Masala*

by her knowledge of Swahili and her affection for Okelo, a black Ugandan and her father's best friend. In Mississippi she is at home in the black disco, and enjoys spending an afternoon with Demetrius's family. By showing Mina's social interaction with individuals from several different cultures, Nair makes the point that such interaction is not only possible but also natural and desirable.

For me, a product of a mixed union (being half East Indian and half Danish), it was a rare and welcome experience to watch a film centered upon

a multicultural character with a talent for social mobility—a skill that a multicultural person has no choice but to hone. The character of Mina, however, crosses more than just cultural boundaries. In *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, bell hooks writes about the intersection of oppression based on gender, class, and race, and the need to address all of these oppressions simultaneously and not to be forced into choosing to battle against one or another of them.

Mississippi Masala, unlike most commercial films, features an active female character: Mina goes places, does things, speaks her mind. She is the one to initiate contact with Demetrius after their chance meeting; she is the one to chase down Demetrius's truck in order to make him face her, something Demetrius is trying to avoid. She is an active participant in their lovemaking, and never plays a coy game of having to be coaxed.

Mina is a young working-class woman of color, and depending on the situation, she identifies differently in a given scene. She fits right in to the social world of a big Indian wedding ceremony; in the argument with her parents over Demetrius she identifies as a young person and as an American. When meeting Demetrius's family, she identifies as an African. In scheming with Demetrius about reviving his business, Mina, the daughter of a former barrister, identifies as a fellow worker, stating that she knows a few things about cleaning toilets—from her job as a hotel employee. Mina's character is multidimensional, in contrast to most other films dealing with interracial relationships, in which the identity emphasized for each of the characters does not go beyond racial categorization (as is the case with the black man and white woman engaged in the doomed—and shallow—relationship of Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*).

A fundamental problem with the film, however, is that it contains two different stories which compete for the audience's attention—the romance between Mina and Demetrius, and the more interesting story centered around Mina's father, Jay, and his relationship to Africa.

When Amin comes to power and the Indians are expelled, Jay has to face exclusion from a country that he considers his homeland. This rejection becomes particularly painful when Okelo tells him that "Africa is for Africans, black Africans," and urges Jay to leave with his family. Jay is a brown man rejected from a black world who in midlife is forced to assimilate into a white world that is totally foreign to him. In emigrating to the United States, Jay must accept a lowered social status—going from a well-to-do barrister to a motel worker—as well as confront his own unexpected racism when his daughter gets involved with Demetrius, a black man. (It is not made clear, however, whether he really objects to the interracial or the sexual aspect of their relationship.)

The father's story is further highlighted by the fact that the movie begins and ends with Jay. The first scene shows Jay and Okelo being stopped at a roadblock at night; the last scene is of Jay coming to terms with his former homeland on his return visit to Uganda.

Although the father is supposed to be a subordinate character, he is the one who experiences the most profound external and internal changes throughout the film. While Mina meets with opposition to her sexual liaison, none of her fundamental beliefs are challenged, nor does she encounter any hurdle so high that she doesn't know how to overcome it. An interracial relationship provides ample material for conflict and character development, yet the film doesn't take advantage of it. The interracial romance used to market the film is in fact upstaged by the more complex and interesting story of the father.

Another provocative issue is raised by Okelo, a secondary but significant character in the film. An alternate reading of his relationship to Mina's family can be drawn from the text, namely, that Okelo is Mina's father. In the very beginning, one of the few possessions that the mother takes from the home is a photograph of Okelo and Mina together; she looks at it wistfully before placing it in her purse. She later places this photograph in a prominent position in the liquor store she runs in Greenwood.

The farewell scene at the bus station in Uganda, when Mina's family, like dozens of other Asian families, are saying good-bye to their black African friends, also suggests a relationship between Okelo and Kinnu—they share an intimate embrace, and get a somewhat hostile look from Jay when he happens upon them. Mina and Okelo's parting is affectionate and their faces are nose-to-nose in the frame, suggesting their similarity in appearance.

Mina is a shade darker than her mother and father, refers to herself as a "darkie," and is mocked for her skin color by gossips in the Indian commu-

nity in Greenwood. If Mina is indeed half African and half Indian, it gives new meaning to the term "masala." Not only is she able to traverse the two cultures, she is the embodiment of the traversal itself. Certainly this reading of Okelo's character is open to debate; but if the film-maker had intended such an ambiguity, the message may be that we are all more racially mixed than we know.

Mississippi Masala is surprisingly humorous, and while the satire is at times at the expense of believable characters, at other times it proves enjoyably enlightening. For example, the issue of internalized racism within the Indian community is conveyed succinctly and comically by one of the gossips at the wedding ceremony (played, incidentally, by the director herself). In trying to quiet her friend's fears about Mina's going out with an eligible and wealthy Indian bachelor—Harry Patel—whom her friend wanted for her *own* daughter, the gossip comments, "You can be dark and have money, or you can be light and have no money, but you can't be dark and have no money and get Harry Patel." An elegant way of explaining the racial and class hierarchies within the Indian community.

Although *Mississippi Masala* shows the racial animosities between the Indians and the blacks, the larger context is often ignored. In a picnic scene at Demetrius's house, the film does point out the parallel between Africans who were enslaved in the U.S. and Indians enslaved as indentured servants in Africa: both identify with a homeland they have never seen. But when asked why she left Africa, Mina is interrupted by Demetrius before she can answer. Thus the opening scenes of the film, when the Asians are being expelled from Uganda, are never explained.

It's not mentioned that Indians had become the merchant class in Uganda, and as such were taken to be the agents of oppression, becoming targets of the Amin government. The less visible but more powerful force in Africa, the British, are not mentioned at all, nor is the legacy of their divide-and-conquer tactics. Similarly, in the U.S. setting, the Indian and African-American communities are seen bickering and cheating one another throughout the film, claiming a phony solidarity at one moment that falls apart at the next. Lacking any political or historical context, we are reduced to seeing these issues at the level of individual weaknesses, hypocrisy, and bigotry, without recognizing the result of systematic and enforced racist and classist oppression that has been perpetrated for decades and continues today.

Symptomatic of this approach is *Masala*'s simplistic solution to the problems that the two protagonists face. This film, which is original in many ways—international drama, interracial relationships, characters of color—unfortunately relies for resolution on the familiar Hollywood tradition of romantic love as a panacea reserved for exceptionally beautiful people.

One of the issues that film-makers of color face is the depiction of their own ethnic group in their work. I found many of the Indian characters in *Masala* to be negative and satirized. The film presents two kinds of Indians—Mina and her family, who are portrayed genuinely and sympathetically, and the rest of the Indian community, who are portrayed as caricatures. Their mannerisms, such as the bobbing of the head from side to side (an Indian way of saying yes), are exaggerated to the point of ridicule. At the wedding ceremony, the men are drunks and the women are gossips. The hotel owner is greedy and hypocritical—paying lip service to people-of-color solidarity in one moment and disapproving of the mixed-racial romance the next. The bridegroom is depicted as effeminate, impotent, and ludicrous—in one of several bedroom scenes, he checks under his pajamas for an erection, then hops on top of his bride, who emphatically rejects him; he puts on headphones and watches TV instead. The Indian community is shown to be greedy, petty, and ridiculous. If a non-Indian film-maker had portrayed such characters, there would have been public outcry at the racist stereotypes. What does it mean for a film-maker to make such a film about her own people?

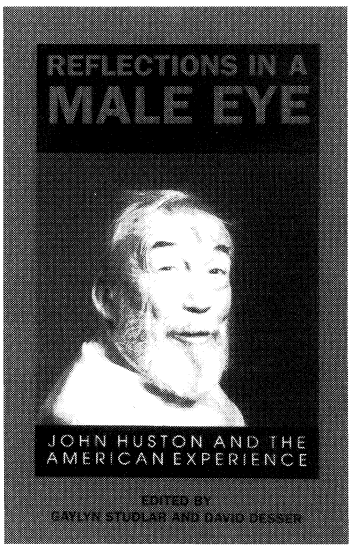
In contrast to the Indians, the black characters in *Mississippi Masala* are much more three-dimensional—Okelo, Demetrius's father, his Aunt Rose, and even his friend Tyrone and his younger brother are shown as having both strengths and flaws. Tyrone, who first appears to be simply a womanizer, is a faithful friend; he picks Demetrius up from court, and his only objection to the sexual relationship with Mina is that it's dangerous and could get his friend in trouble. The younger brother, who is initially

shown as a goof-off, is supportive of his brother when the pressure starts to mount.

The expanded question then becomes: What does it mean for a film-maker to depict her own culture in such a negative light and yet treat another culture with such sensitivity? Is it that she feels privileged to poke fun at her own kind? Are these scenes included purely for comic relief? While the almost slapstick behavior of the Indian community may add humor, these characters are limited and seem to be lifted from a movie of a different genre. If *Mississippi Masala* is trying to raise real issues about the mutual racism between the Indians and the African Americans, both groups need to be represented on equal ground. Yet despite the shortcoming in characterization, the film deserves credit for taking on the ever-critical issue of racism in the United States and for making us think about the effects of racism on and between two different communities of color.

ERIKA SURAT ANDERSEN

■ Erika Surat Andersen is an independent film-maker living in Los Angeles.



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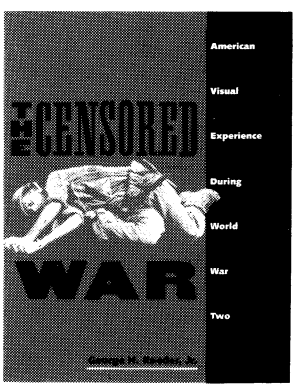

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Annual Film Quarterly Book Roundup

Although it takes up precious space, I'd like to quickly thank FQ*'s Book Review Editor, Stephen Prince, and the former Books Editor, David Desser, for all their hard work. We are getting more up-to-date with our review coverage, and fewer books are slipping through the net. If you don't see what you're looking for here, it's likely that it will be in the Fall issue. Once again, the large number of books—and the equally large number of diligent reviewers—entails a two-part Book Survey. And it looks as though this will be the case from now on.*

A.M.

Assault on Society

Satirical Literature to Film

By Donald W. McCaffrey. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1992. $35.00 cloth; $19.50 paper.

Donald W. McCaffrey's book *Assault on Society: Satirical Literature to Film* sets out to reevaluate satirical films of the 1960s and 1970s that were adapted from literary works of satire. This second look is necessary, he claims, because most film critics and reviewers of that time period measured film satire against literary masters of the genre, such as Molière, Swift, Rabelais, etc., instead of viewing film as a unique medium in a modern context.

Film, as McCaffrey points out, has certain obstacles to overcome in realizing satire. The greatest hurdle is the dependent relationship of film to its audience. Traditionally, the film industry has been primarily concerned with making large sums of money, which means creating films lots of people want to see. In the 1960s and 1970s, censorship and social tolerance of the Cold War, among other social issues, added a considerable burden to the risks a film-maker was willing or able to take in bringing a film of any kind to the screen. How then, to transform a satirical work, whose very essence depends on denouncing and ridiculing elements of the status quo, into a product that will appeal to a mass film audience?

To a large extent, McCaffrey asserts, film-makers failed in this endeavor, gutting whatever material was deemed "offensive" to a general moviegoing audience and therefore negatively altering or even removing entirely the satirical elements of the literary work. However, McCaffrey does describe a variety of successful films in this account of the film industry's rapport with dark comedy and satire; *The Day of the Locust*, *Being There*, and *Tom Jones* are but a few examples, and the works of one artist continually make his "best of" list—those of director Stanley Kubrick, whose films, especially *Dr. Strangelove* and *A Clockwork Orange*, retained or even improved upon the satirical content of their literary sources.

McCaffrey views the future of satirical films with an optimistic eye. Even though there has been an apparent decline of strong satirical novels and plays, film-makers have learned to rely less on literary sources and more upon their own visions. He cites such varied works as

Brazil, *Prizzi's Honor*, *Reuben, Reuben*, and even *Blue Velvet* as successful contributions to the genre. "Since these works have the stamp of the independent film-maker," he believes that "the future for a vital screen satire looks bright."

Overall, *Assault on Society* succeeds both in outlining and in explaining the film industry's attempt to deal with satire in the 1960s and 1970s, and delivers a solid overview of the tradition of satire in our culture. McCaffrey provides a sufficient and informative review of the tradition of satire in literature, especially American and British works emerging after World War II, and how their tone and content affected 1960s and 1970s film-makers. He also relates other influences, such as the absurdist movement, the attitude of British comedy, and the works of early Hollywood directors.

In discussing specific films, it appears he has gone to particular effort to research pre-production scripts and other archival material when available. At times the book delves too much into specific details, but more often than not those details prove helpful in pointing out exactly how a director portrayed satiric intent and how the final result relates to the original literary source.

The structure of the book itself provides both advantages and disadvantages for the reader. Organized into topics such as "Corrupt and Crumbling Institutions" and "Sex, Love and Other Misalliances," this arrangement works well in explaining the modes and methods of satire. However, it does tend to obscure the chronologic evolution of the film industry's liaison with the satiric mode. McCaffrey is at his best when employing his talents for overview and analysis, especially when pointing out that satire exists as an essential method of social catharsis, and thus an effective agent of change—something that seems to be in high demand these days.

KATY BUDGE

■ Katy Budge is a freelance writer with a background in literature and film studies.

Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media

By Roswitha Mueller. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. $27.50.

Through the films of Godard, Straub/Huillet, and Fassbinder, among others, we have internalized many of the codes of what might be called a Brechtian aesthetic and are by now more or less familiar with, for example, anti-illusionism, self-reflexivity, episodic structure, and the deliberate underlining of artifice, etc. Roswitha Mueller's laudable project seems to be the resituating of such Brechtian devices at the point of their emergence in the corpus of Brecht's theoretical and productive work, mainly of the 1920s and 1930s, although she also gives consideration to his Hollywood period and to his collaboration with DEFA in the GDR.

In contrast to the important Brecht issues of *Screen* in the seventies (vol. 15, no. 2 and vol. 16, no. 4), Mueller wants to historicize Brecht, contextualizing his work in relation to the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, to his legacy from agit-prop theater and the work in Berlin with Erwin Piscator, and to his association with the ideas of the Central and Eastern European left, Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, and so forth. Indeed, the book reads almost like a compendium of encyclopedia entries on some of the central ideas of Brecht's thought. Encyclopedic as it may be, however, the book is in fact a slim volume, economically organized into five chapters.

The first chapter, "The Twenties: Author vs. Producer," deals with the salient Brechtian notion that the author of a work should be able to intervene at every stage of its production, and also that the producers of art should own the means of its production. The second chapter, on "The *Lehrstück*," takes up again the question of the interventionary force of the work of art. Chapter 3 offers a short reception history of Brecht's only successful film, *Kuhle Wampe*, the point of which is to tie in the remarks of the film's censors in Berlin with Lukács's arguments on Socialist Realism in his touted debates with Brecht.

Brecht's opposition to Lukács's idea of individual character as avatar of social causality can be seen, according to Mueller, in his notion of the *gestus*, which focuses on the social situation itself; and Chapter 4, which is devoted to an analysis of the *gestus* as a montage element, is perhaps this book's most useful segment. The *gestus* is a gesture, an action, or a posture, a word, a tone of voice, or a facial expression, which reveals "in an instant" a complex of specific social relationships. The chapter features a good shot-by-shot analysis of six syntagma from *Kuhle Wampe* (the "job hunting" sequence), suggesting that Brecht built up the sequence by autonomous shots with tableau effect.

In the final chapter Mueller undertakes to assess the dissemination and reception of Brecht in France, England, the United States, and Germany. This is an odd chapter in that it takes up one by one those persons whom Brecht may be said to have influenced, but there is no integration or overview of the separate pieces. There are also some problematic formulations here and there, such as the idea that Metz, by an "odd dialectical twist," (111) represents a development of Brechtian theory, or the idea that Brecht and melodrama are largely compatible.

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DEBORAH LINDERMAN

■ Deborah Linderman directs the Film Studies Program at Smith College.

Bio/Pics

How Hollywood Constructed Public History

By George F. Custen. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992. $40.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

Released in 1991, *The Babe* demonstrated that Hollywood continues to romance the biographical film. Though the picture raised questions about George Herman Ruth as the Great Man of baseball, it was very much a throwback to the biopics of the 1930s and 1940s, a genre that fell on hard times in the 1960s and, except as television docudrama, never recovered. George Custen has less interest in the decline of the genre than in its assumptions, ethos, and practical production; as such, well researched and well argued, *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* constitutes a desirable addition to motion picture and communication studies.

Narrative demands selection and shape. Historical narrative demands no less, but, as Custen shows, Hollywood historical narrative, far more than its literary counterpart, was hampered by legal, economic, moral, and aesthetic constraints. The biographical film proves the point. Matters as diverse as gender (which Custen does not treat at length) and star persona were at issue as, from 1927 to 1960, Hollywood constructed its self-referential code of history. Moving from and beyond Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own*, Custen shows that Hollywood history was sometimes nothing more than the history of Hollywood.

> Biopics also created a view of history that was based on the cosmology of the movie industry; in this world, key historical figures became stars, and the producers of these films often filtered the content of a great life through the sieve of their own experiences, values, and personalities. In this view of history, the greatness of the individual figure becomes that set of qualities that made a producer great or powerful in Hollywood, rather than those traits that characterized the famous person in his or her own lifetime. (4–5)

In a useful, cross-referenced appendix, Custen shows that Hollywood produced 291 biopics between 1927 and 1960. Though the "professions" included outlaws and athletes as well as explorers and paramours, the most popular subject was the artist or performer. The studios made 55 pictures about entertainers, for in celebrating the vaudevillian or actor, the producer also celebrated himself.

Biographical films usually opened on scenes of the subject as a young adult, *in medias res*, no origins, no upbringing. In Hollywood the famous producer likewise had no childhood and no past. He was not (and never had been) "Ragpicker" or "Glove Salesman." He was "Entrepreneur" or "Showman." Period. He had "produced" himself and, like an entertainer, he was an outsider whose talent and success were avenues to assimilation and acceptance. As Custen notes, "the cycle of innovation controlled by the mechanism of popular acceptance becomes the model in biopics, a model strikingly similar to a box office-dominated industry like the moving picture community." (208)

Hoping to elude the grosser biases that occur when the researcher uses subjective criteria to select his sample, Custen draws on the theory and methods of the social sciences, on George Gerbner, Hayden White, and (repeatedly) Leo Lowenthal.

Hayden White helps Custen challenge notions of "accuracy" in the biopic; as White suggests, history is not only mediated but condensed, displaced, symbolized, and qualified. An exponent of the Frankfurt School, Lowenthal offers support elsewhere. By accenting greatness, Custen says, the biopic strengthens and valorizes the status quo, specifically the moviegoer's position in the social structure. Actors were double-dosed reinforcements and justifications of that hierarchy: the audience revered Queen Elizabeth not only because she ruled so well but because she was the movie star Bette Davis.

Hollywood was concerned with historicity. Though the content of pictures like *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) may have had scant correspondence to historical incidents, the pictures were extensively researched. Even independent producers like Selznick maintained research departments, and in publicity they underscored the "facts" in each biopic they released.

Just the same, Custen indicates that the only research that mattered was archival—Hollywood archival. Twentieth Century-Fox based *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell* (1939) less on incidents in the inventor's life than on the narrative strategy and technique of other Fox successes, pictures such as *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939),

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Suez (1938), and *In Old Chicago* (1938). Bell and other subjects were Frankenstein monsters that Darryl Zanuck assembled out of bits and pieces from other fiction or nonfiction characters.

Bio/Pics contains a number of case studies; they are short, even truncated (perhaps necessarily so), and none tells more than *Night and Day*. For $300,000, Cole Porter sold Warner Bros. his life story, including the right to "dramatize, fictionalize, or emphasize any or all incidents" or to "interpolate such incidents as Producers may deem necessary in order to obtain a treatment or continuity of commercial value." (119)

Hollywood would weave truth and fiction, as Porter, homosexual and married, had already done in so-called real life. Warner Bros. would portray the songwriter as heterosexual and his life as "a 'wholesome' story" (123), not because the 1930 Production Code forced Hollywood to mask the treatment of homosexuality but because heterosexual romance was a biopic convention.

Hollywood was the champion of the Great Man as the *normal* Great Man. In *Night and Day,* Warners altered the chronology of Porter's oeuvre so that the song "Night and Day," written almost 15 years after World War I, was an expression, during the war, of the composer's longing for his absent love, his wife, Linda Lee. Zanuck (the touchstone producer for Custen) worked to balance the normal and the exceptional in picture after picture. On the story of Alexander Graham Bell, for example, he insisted that the studio "normalize" the inventor. "A man who devotes all his time to deaf and dumb can be a freak if we don't make him so real, so human, so down to earth and such a regular guy. A scientific person can be a strange bird." (132) Here and elsewhere, Custen's scouring of the files of Twentieth Century-Fox, Warners, RKO, and the Production Code helps remind us of the industrial setting that made the biopics such a conservative genre.

Occasionally *Bio/Pics* shoots off ideas like Roman candles, long on sparkle, short on duration. The cornerstone of the biopic was misfortune and suffering, because, according to conventional opinion, audiences liked to see the great hobbled. Per Lowenthal, though, Custen argues for a Hollywood "taxonomy of suffering" that in the biopic links suffering with the means of its alleviation—the family, the community, the home. A provocative but underdeveloped point.

Bio/Pics also discusses the kinship of the biopic and other genres. Margo Channing in *All About Eve* (1950) was the "sister" of Mary of Scotland, Ruth Etting, and Lillian Roth, notes Custen, who also says that the George Jessel character in the backstage musical *The I Don't Care Girl* (1953) was the "brother" of Darryl Zanuck. "This is great stuff," the Jessel character says, browbeating the producers of a biopic about the vaudevillian Eva Tanguay.

> This is great stuff. But it's all worthless . . . it only proves Eva Tanguay was famous. . . . But it doesn't tell me why. Find out what made her madcap, find out why she sang "I Don't Care," . . . I don't want alibis or psychoanalysis—I want Eva Tanguay, the woman. Underneath those sequins and feathers and the mop of wild curls was a woman's heart and a woman's brain—maybe even a woman's soul—that's what I want. (173)

Could Jessel *and* Zanuck be the brothers of Ralston in *Citizen Kane*, the *News on the March* editor who tells the reporter, "Rosebud. Dead or alive. It'll probably turn out to be a very simple thing"? That the biopic shares common ground with other genre pictures tends to weaken certain of Custen's assumptions and thus deserves more attention, if only in a long aside or footnote.

In its last chapter, *Bio/Pics* treats the television biographical film. Here Custen covers ground that he has trod earlier in the book; perhaps worse, he allows charts and statistics to dominate. Otherwise, *Bio/Pics* stands as a lucid and original study, a valuable contribution to the expanding literature on the Hollywood classical film.

LEONARD J. LEFF

■ Leonard J. Leff teaches at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

Black Cinema Treasures

Lost and Found

By G. William Jones. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1991. $29.95.

Film scholars and historians, buffs and aficionados rejoice at the news of long-lost films turning up in unlikely places—small historical museums, as was the case with *Birth of a Race*, or warehouses, as was the case with the films called "black cinema treasures." We have been known to travel at the drop of a hint to seek out such a treasure, be it film footage, company records, correspondence, or memorabilia.

In 1983 a cache of black films was found in Tyler, Texas. Three of us—Richard Shickel from *Time* magazine, John Hambro from "Live at 5" in New York, and I—left immediately for Dallas to see some of the films that Bill Jones, founder/Director of the Southwest Film/Video Archives at Southern Methodist University, was just beginning to dig out of the found cans. Although most of what we saw were films that many of us had been teaching for some years, there was always the possibility that the

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prints would be better or more complete than those that were extant of, for example, Spencer Williams' *The Blood of Jesus* and *Dirty Gertie from Harlem, U.S.A.*, or Oscar Micheaux's *Murder in Harlem* and *God's Stepchildren*. And there were titles not seen for years that, with private sector funding for restoration, brought into circulation the "Tyler, Texas, Black Film Collection." According to Jones, "the first seven of the features and seven of the shorts [are] now ready to be seen in a form as close as humanly possible to their original forms." His book, *Black Cinema Treasures: Lost and Found,* describes his discovery of the existence of these films, many of which were on pre-1950s nitrate stock, his identification of a number of them as all black cast (known in the trade as "race") films, and the steps he took to bring them to light.

Black Cinema Treasures looks briefly at several pioneer black film-makers, Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, William Alexander, and George Randol, and gives synopses of ten of the feature films, six film shorts, and four By-Line Newsreel episodes in the Tyler collection. In an appendix to the book ("Independent Black Films: 1910–1957") Jones provides a list, without annotation, of approximately 360 all black cast films (or film titles—alternative titles also appear in the list) "meant primarily for black audiences, not produced by any of the Hollywood or New York studios, and produced instead by the small independent film-makers." If a film was produced by a black film company or if blacks had a hand in some aspect of the production, the title appears in the list in boldface type. The most important thing about this list is that it provides an indication, by asterisk, of these films that are in the Southwest Film/Video Archives in some format—35mm, 16mm, or videotape—although it does not indicate how many of them are accessible to scholars, students, or researchers.

In his foreword to *Black Cinema Treasures*, Ossie Davis, who has written, acted, directed, and produced, underscores the importance of these films as "documentation of a very rich period in our history." And independent African-American film-maker William Greaves, who was himself an actor in race films (including two in the Tyler collection, *Souls of Sin* and *Miracle in Harlem*), sees these films as having been invaluable to the black community: "They were our way of stating in our own language that we, too, were somebody—that we had an important place in the public mythology by which definitions about important events were being made."

PHYLLIS R. KLOTMAN

■ Phyllis R. Klotman is Director of the Black Film Center/Archive, at Indiana University in Bloomington.

British Genres

Cinema and Society, 1930–1960

By Marcia Landy. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991. $65.00 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Marcia Landy's *British Genres* represents an important reevaluation of film-making in Britain during the middle of the twentieth century. Its contention is that popular films of this era, too often dismissed as merely commercial and therefore trivial by the doyens of high culture, can be seen to constitute a series of genres embracing what Landy calls the "still-to-be-discovered riches of British filmmaking." Disavowing the modernist antithesis between high and low cultures, Landy proposes to deconstruct a binary opposition between the pleasure principle and the reality principle that has dogged British culture during this century. Her argument is not dissimilar to that made recently by Robert Murphy's *Realism and Tinsel* (1989), which similarly disparages the auteurist equation of a "genuine" British cinema with 1930s' forms of documentary realism or other flights from the dreadful allure of tinseltown. Like Murphy, Landy sets about critically reclaiming the more popular cinematic texts of this time, though the range of material covered here is more extensive than in Murphy's work.

She attempts to avoid the reification of genre into any kind of "essential and impersonal structure" by insisting upon the historical and contingent nature of these aesthetic forms. For Landy, the concept of genre operates as a mechanism of social exchange; she locates meaning in the negotiations between generic formula and a film-maker's idiosyncratic vision, or in the spaces between genre and an individual film's refraction of social and political tensions. In this way, her book chooses to highlight a chain of discontinuities between abstract form and material content. In Landy's eyes, the idea of genre is at its most revealing when a film fails entirely to conform to its own generic parameters, thus raising questions about the "contradictions" between archetype and social representation and why such contradictions occur. Landy pursues this argument through a consideration of nine generic categories: the historical film, the empire film, the war film, the woman's film, tragic melodramas, family melodramas, film comedies, horror and science fiction, and the social problem film. Her sweep is so encyclopaedic, in fact, that it becomes difficult to read this book from cover to cover, especially as there is a certain repetitive quality to its organization. For each film she considers, Landy summarizes the plot, describes the critical reaction, and then exposes the contradictions.

prints would be better or more complete than those that were extant of, for example, Spencer Williams' *The Blood of Jesus* and *Dirty Gertie from Harlem, U.S.A.*, or Oscar Micheaux's *Murder in Harlem* and *God's Stepchildren*. And there were titles not seen for years that, with private sector funding for restoration, brought into circulation the "Tyler, Texas, Black Film Collection." According to Jones, "the first seven of the features and seven of the shorts [are] now ready to be seen in a form as close as humanly possible to their original forms." His book, *Black Cinema Treasures: Lost and Found,* describes his discovery of the existence of these films, many of which were on pre-1950s nitrate stock, his identification of a number of them as all black cast (known in the trade as "race") films, and the steps he took to bring them to light.

Black Cinema Treasures looks briefly at several pioneer black film-makers, Oscar Micheaux, Spencer Williams, William Alexander, and George Randol, and gives synopses of ten of the feature films, six film shorts, and four By-Line Newsreel episodes in the Tyler collection. In an appendix to the book ("Independent Black Films: 1910–1957") Jones provides a list, without annotation, of approximately 360 all black cast films (or film titles—alternative titles also appear in the list) "meant primarily for black audiences, not produced by any of the Hollywood or New York studios, and produced instead by the small independent film-makers." If a film was produced by a black film company or if blacks had a hand in some aspect of the production, the title appears in the list in boldface type. The most important thing about this list is that it provides an indication, by asterisk, of these films that are in the Southwest Film/Video Archives in some format—35mm, 16mm, or videotape—although it does not indicate how many of them are accessible to scholars, students, or researchers.

In his foreword to *Black Cinema Treasures*, Ossie Davis, who has written, acted, directed, and produced, underscores the importance of these films as "documentation of a very rich period in our history." And independent African-American film-maker William Greaves, who was himself an actor in race films (including two in the Tyler collection, *Souls of Sin* and *Miracle in Harlem*), sees these films as having been invaluable to the black community: "They were our way of stating in our own language that we, too, were somebody—that we had an important place in the public mythology by which definitions about important events were being made."

PHYLLIS R. KLOTMAN

■ Phyllis R. Klotman is Director of the Black Film Center/Archive, at Indiana University in Bloomington.

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This method of interpretation works best for films where there is an elaborate series of contradictions. Landy is particularly good on the Ealing comedies, where class tensions clearly abound, and on horror films, where her situation of the genre in relation to the institutionalized xenophobia of the postwar years seems especially to benefit from an outsider's perspective. She also has interesting things to say on the Gainsborough melodramas, though the way she cites the work of Sue Harper so frequently here suggests how this book at times privileges comprehensiveness of coverage over originality of theory.

In fact, the success of *British Genres* appears to emerge from more empirical factors than we might infer from the author's self-consciously theoretical first chapter. This book is particularly useful because it is a treasure trove of information about neglected films and because it recirculates so much critical material relating to British cinema of this era. Though the argument about genres is interesting, it is not in itself complex or subtle enough to be sustained and developed over a book that spans some 500 pages. Sometimes, moreover, the genre-and-contradiction pattern appears inadequate, especially in the chapter on comedy, where the author's mythic approach has the unfortunate effect of flattening out textual particularities into abstract banalities. To say of the St. Trinian's films, school comedies made in the 1950s by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, that they "explode the myth of childhood innocence and, for that matter, any notion of innocence" is like claiming "The Simpsons" explodes the myth of happy family life. In its very obviousness and laboriousness, the comment betokens a critical weakness of this structuralist approach.

The chapter on comedy is where Landy's detachment from British society, an asset in other contexts, is seen to its least advantage. In particular, I felt the absence here of any substantial discussion of how British film comedies after the Second World War came to intermesh with the expectations established by popular radio and television shows. Instead, we find in this book a tendency toward formalist abstraction that occasionally becomes irritating. Writing of the 1942 war film *Went the Day Well?*, for instance, Landy attempts to accentuate the treacherous nature of the squire in this film by playing off such a "contradiction" against the fact that "the character of the squire . . . in literature and British mythology has been regarded as a most exemplary British figure." But in the novels of Fielding or Trollope or George Eliot, squires are by no means universally represented in this "exemplary" way. Despite her declared anti-idealism and insistence upon how genres are constructed within shifting historical frameworks, there still lurks a residual essentialism within some of Landy's critical assumptions. This is implied at the end of the book, when she tries to sum up "what is particularly British about British genres." The Britishness of Britain, like the old idealization of American exceptionalism, is surely a chimera best left to the metaphysicians.

Still, no book can do everything, and it is important to recognize what this book does offer, which is a great deal. There are, to be sure, a few repetitions, a few lacunae, a few inconsistencies that might have been cleared up by stronger editing. Overall, though, this is a solid, well-researched and well-presented book, destined quickly to become one of those well-worn volumes on the library shelves whose signs of premature physical decay imply the book's great value to the academic community and indeed to anyone with an interest in British cinema.

PAUL GILES

■ Paul Giles teaches English and film studies at Portland State University.

Brooklyn Is Not Expanding

Woody Allen's Comic Universe

By Annette Wernblad. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992. $29.50.

Dedicated fans and scholarly admirers of Woody Allen will immediately recognize that Annette Wernblad's slender study of Allen's work is the second book to draw its title from a memorable joke in *Annie Hall*. The first was Diane Jacobs' much earlier yet still superior . . . *but we need the eggs*. In fact, it should be said right now that this book, at under 150 pages of text (including footnotes) is hardly likely to be, as the dust jacket claims, "the most comprehensive analysis of Woody Allen's works to date." It is typical of this book, the product of a scholar teaching film and American studies in Denmark (I do not know if the author is Danish—the book is written in solid if uninspired English) that it gets the basics of Allen right, while missing the subtleties. The basics include the tracing of dichotomies, like dream/reality, mind/body, Jew/WASP, throughout his work, the creation of the shlemiel persona, the gradual move away from parodic comedy, in short, little that has not been said before, although the author states it clearly and concisely. The subtleties include, for instance, the way the author fails to appreciate fully the joke from which she derives her book's title.

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that the universe is expanding and will eventually break apart; therefore, he can see no great purpose in doing his assignments. His exasperated mother wonders what the universe has got to do with their life in Brooklyn, for "Brooklyn is not expanding." For Wernblad, this reflects the Allen persona's mental state, which makes more of the threat than is realistically justified. The intricacies of the joke stem not from the absurdity of Alvy's youthful alienation, but rather from the very Jewish propensity for linking the metaphysical with the physical, the sacred with the mundane.

There are, however, good things to be found among the mostly familiar takes on Allen's films. The author contributes a very sensitive reading of *Another Woman*, making a convincing case for both the artistry and humanity of this film. In fact, Ms. Wernblad is in general very perceptive about women's roles in Allen's films. I was struck, for instance, by the notion that Allen extended the idea of the shlemiel not only, as is clear, to female characters like Annie Hall and Cecilia (in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*) but also to Tracy (in *Manhattan*) and to Holly (in *Hannah and Her Sisters*). Mostly, however, the book reads like a sensitive student's attempt to come to terms with a foreign or unfamiliar culture. The requisite readings are referred to (Irving Howe, Christopher Lasch, Ruth Wisse) and predictable results emerge. What is most interesting about the book, perhaps, is that far from seeming to emerge from another culture, Ms. Wernblad's take on Allen is all too familiar.

DAVID DESSER

■ David Desser is the editor of *Cinema Journal*; he teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Celluloid Sisters

Women and Popular Cinema

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Janet Thumin's *Celluloid Sisters: Women and Popular Cinema* is an important work which attempts to reckon with female reception of film in Britain from the 1940s through the 1960s. As such, it constitutes an interesting companion to Antonia Lant's recent volume, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema*. Most specifically, Thumin is interested not only in the models which popular films offered to women, but also in the way women made use of the film texts and how these works contributed to the subjugation of women in the postwar period.

Unfortunately, given the lack of any interviews with women who actually viewed these films, much of the theory on female spectatorship remains just that—theory. Even contemporary interviews with women who saw the initial releases suffer from faulty memory and corrections of hindsight. Thus those scholars working in the area of audience studies are faced with a formidable hurdle, especially those interested in approaching the subject scientifically.

Thumin solves the problem in a variety of ways. First, she performed a textual analysis, focusing on the descriptive and narrative function of each major female character and on this character's positioning in relation to the audience. Next, she scrutinized the trade publications and women's magazines for contemporary responses to each film, paying particular attention to box office as an indicator of popularity. But as she herself admits, "Given that meanings of a film are the product of an active negotiation between the reader and the film text," it is difficult to know for sure how individual females in the audience actually "read" the images. But, given that each work has only a finite number of readings, she is able, through careful computation, to come to some conclusions.

Her findings are summarized in the final chapters, broken down into categories such as mothers and motherhood, love and marriage, female friendship, female knowledge and power, rape and assault, working/wage-earning women, divorce, education, and the women's movement. These chapters include information she has collated about the social, national, or racial groups, the age, sexual status, and occupation of the female characters. What makes this information especially valuable is that the work is a longitudinal study. Although we hardly needed Thumin to let us know that there are fewer female roles available today than in the past, it was interesting to learn that in the 1940s, despite the prominence of the woman's film, females accounted for less than one half of all screen roles, and that in the 1950s and 1960s this number dropped even further, male characters outnumbering females by more than 2:1.

Thumin also includes two excellent chapters: one on the importance of narrative resolution and the other on the film audience and the female reader; and a theoretical chapter which covers the status of the text and feminist notions of spectatorship (this is especially helpful for readers outside of film studies).

Much of this material is not new, but it is valuable to have it presented in an organized fashion and to discover that it reaffirms much of the previous thinking on female stereotyping. Thumin's work is of special interest in that her study includes popular films outside the range of strictly "women's films," and American as well as British works. Thus, a drama like *East of Eden* can be discussed

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next to Ford's Western, *The Searchers*, which might have been seen by the same viewer within a one-year period.

My major criticisms of the book are in the area of presentation. Although it is a slim volume, 247 pages in all, much of the material is repetitious. In addition, Thumin lays out the study as if she were writing a dissertation and had to defend each choice. It takes her 86 pages to get to the heart of the matter. Given the inherent liveliness of the subject matter, it seems to me that she could have created a more readable book, although the use of quotations throughout does help to bring the films to life. Finally, not to quibble, but it would have been valuable if Thumin had found Janice Welsch's work on actress archetypes and star popularity, which would have enhanced her material on the 1950s, and Philip Wylie's *Generation of Vipers*, which would have provided her with a better understanding of the backlash against mothers and motherhood in America during the same period.

PATRICIA BRETT ERENS

■ Patricia Brett Erens is professor of film studies at Rosary College in River Forest, Illinois. She is the editor of *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (Indiana University Press).

The Cinema of Federico Fellini

By Peter Bondanella. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $49.50 cloth; $17.95 paper.

"Madge is the pretty one," Millie Owens exclaims in William Inge's *Picnic* (1953), contrasting her plain, intellectual self with her attractive, unscholarly sister. The generation that embraced European cinema in the 1950s—partly because of its novelty, partly out of disenchantment with the Hollywood product—made a similar distinction: Fellini was the emotional one, a font of compassion for freaks and loners, but lacking the introspection and depth of Bergman, whose existential angst made his films the cinematic equivalent of Kierkegaard.

Dichotomies, like mnemonics, are hard to abandon, but Bondanella's book should inter the Fellini-Bergman distinction permanently. His Fellini—the definitive Fellini—is not just the ambivalent Catholic using Christian typology to underscore the tension between ecclesiastical bureaucracy and the message of the Gospels; nor is he another Jungian who found an alternative to mimesis in dreams. Bondanella's Fellini is, first and foremost, an artist—literally. While many directors can storyboard, their sketches are often little more than stick figures. Before he turned to film, Fellini was a cartoonist and caricature artist. But to think of him merely as someone more interested in images than words is to ignore his varied background. While "going hyphenate" is hardly unique in film, few careers have been as hyphenated as Fellini's—the cartoonist-gagwriter-caricaturist-journalist-radio scriptwriter-screenwriter-director-TV commercials producer.

If Fellini's visuals embed themselves in the memory (the beach at the end of *La Strada*, the opening of *La Dolce Vita* with the helicopter carrying a statue of Christ over the rooftops of Rome), it is because Italian popular culture sharpened the young Fellini's visual sense. Although he never forgot the clowns of his youth, he began seeing them not merely as the itinerant entertainers of *La Strada* but as the fascists of *Amarcord* and *Orchestra Rehearsal*.

While it may seem that another Fellini emerged after *La Dolce Vita*, it is rather that his art reached another stage in its evolution. Just as he expanded the parameters of neorealism by extending them to Catholic humanism (as reflected in such character types as Christ figures, Magdalens, and spiritual questers), he enlarged his narrative sense to include the world of dream and fantasy, substituting closure for the more traditional denouement. *Fellini Satyricon* may lack linearity, but it is a carefully constructed film that works on two different levels: as an evocation of Petronius' fragmentary novel that preserves all its frustrating gaps and disruptions, and as a twin reflector of a decadent past and a decadent present. If *Fellini Satyricon* seems less about Neronian Rome and more about the 1960s counterculture, it is because the 1960s, like Neronian Rome, has become a series of frescos in need of as much restoration as the world of Petronius.

While there will undoubtedly be other books on Fellini, they will all be indebted to Bondanella, who has the ideal qualifications for such an undertaking: fluency in the director's native tongue, an enviable background in Italian literature, and access to the Fellini archives at Indiana University. If, as Bondanella argues, Fellini's "inexhaustible capacity for love" makes him unique among film-makers, Bondanella's love of his subject, expressed through scholarship of the highest order, puts us all in his debt.

BERNARD F. DICK

■ Bernard F. Dick teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

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If Fellini's visuals embed themselves in the memory (the beach at the end of *La Strada*, the opening of *La Dolce Vita* with the helicopter carrying a statue of Christ over the rooftops of Rome), it is because Italian popular culture sharpened the young Fellini's visual sense. Although he never forgot the clowns of his youth, he began seeing them not merely as the itinerant entertainers of *La Strada* but as the fascists of *Amarcord* and *Orchestra Rehearsal*.

While it may seem that another Fellini emerged after *La Dolce Vita*, it is rather that his art reached another stage in its evolution. Just as he expanded the parameters of neorealism by extending them to Catholic humanism (as reflected in such character types as Christ figures, Magdalens, and spiritual questers), he enlarged his narrative sense to include the world of dream and fantasy, substituting closure for the more traditional denouement. *Fellini Satyricon* may lack linearity, but it is a carefully constructed film that works on two different levels: as an evocation of Petronius' fragmentary novel that preserves all its frustrating gaps and disruptions, and as a twin reflector of a decadent past and a decadent present. If *Fellini Satyricon* seems less about Neronian Rome and more about the 1960s counterculture, it is because the 1960s, like Neronian Rome, has become a series of frescos in need of as much restoration as the world of Petronius.

While there will undoubtedly be other books on Fellini, they will all be indebted to Bondanella, who has the ideal qualifications for such an undertaking: fluency in the director's native tongue, an enviable background in Italian literature, and access to the Fellini archives at Indiana University. If, as Bondanella argues, Fellini's "inexhaustible capacity for love" makes him unique among film-makers, Bondanella's love of his subject, expressed through scholarship of the highest order, puts us all in his debt.

BERNARD F. DICK

■ Bernard F. Dick teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

City Boys

Cagney, Bogart, Garfield

By Robert Sklar. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $27.50.

The cover of Robert Sklar's *City Boys* shows mug shots of the book's three heroes—James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, John Garfield—up against a brick wall. The poses are classic ones: Cagney in spry bow tie readying for a speakeasy brawl; Bogart glaring menacingly with ex-con, "Don't cross me," coal-black eyes; Garfield looking gloomy and fatalist, Camus's sun-baked stranger.

All three were Manhattan-born and bred. Cagney, the Yiddish-conversant, Irish-Catholic barkeeper's kid from Avenue D, got around the most energetically, as a *Sun* copy boy, a doorman, a switchboard operator, an amateur boxer, a semipro baseball player. The Big Apple was in his gait, his rat-tat-tat delivery, that "unmistakable touch of the gutter," which, in the actor's proud words, led him decades later to the AFI's Life Achievement Award.

Garfield was Julie Garfinkle, Lower East Side child of downtrodden Jewish immigrants, who escaped a life of juvenile criminality by discovering, at age 13, Art and Culture at the John Dewey-influenced P.S. 45. And Bogart was a rich doctor's son, who emigrated from his Upper West Side brownstone to a New England prep school, then flunked out, Holden Caulfield-style.

No matter the variable bios. To 1930s Hollywood, these actors brought the street-savvy, knuckles-in-your-face élan of New York City. That's the way Warner Bros. used them, and that's the way the public responded to them. As Sklar notes about Depression-era audiences, ". . . the city boy was a contemporary, one recognizable both in daily headlines and in daily life. He was part of their volatile present and their unknown future . . . and he becomes a focal point of the forces of change in American life. . . . The figure may have something to tell us about the fate of rebels in American culture and society, about the values of individual moral codes within larger social constraints, about adaptability and social usefulness, and about survival."

Does all of this sound vague? The most surprising, and disorienting, thing about *City Boys* is how little it explains, or explores, the titular subject. A more appropriate name for the book is Sklar's subtitle, "Cagney, Bogart, Garfield." What Sklar actually does is jump back and forth among the three actors, pushing chronologically through their Hollywood careers, settling in with individual films that pique his interest. His concerns are extremely arbitrary, though he is likely to write expansively if the script has left-of-center concerns or Marxist-leaning screenwriters, or if the film demonstrates the evolving acting styles of any of his three protagonists. Sklar also discusses, knowledgeably, the off-screen politics of his city boys, and he champions each of them when chronicling contract disputes with the hard-line brothers Warner.

Sklar proves weakest when characterizing Garfield, who remains as shadowy as he has become to today's viewers. Sklar practically ignores what, I believe, is key to assessing Garfield's 1940s urban popularity: though there had been Jewish film actors (Jolson, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni), he was the first recognizably Jewish heartthrob.

Cagney has been analyzed engagingly elsewhere, particularly in Patrick McGilligan's *Cagney: The Actor as Auteur*. Sklar writes perceptively about him also, from uncovering the actor's important friendship with radical writer Lincoln Steffens to arguing, eloquently, for several offbeat, barely known Cagney films, such as *These Wilder Years* (1956). Moving to Bogart, Sklar offers some of the best analyses ever of Bogey's acting, demonstrating how a gawky juvenile, who didn't know what to do with his hands for a dozen pictures, weathered into Duke Mantee, Roy Earle, Sam Spade. Sklar also writes brilliantly about the *High-Sierra*-and-beyond Bogart's " . . . capacity simultaneously to project opposing aspects of his character, savagery and sentimentality, fatalism and aspiration."

As for Bogey's Rick in *Casablanca*: the legends are wrong; neither George Raft nor Ronald Reagan was slated to play the immortal part. Sklar uncovered a telling note from producer Hal Wallis to studio chief Jack Warner. "Bogart is ideal for it, and it is being written for him," Wallis said.

With *City Boys*, the *Casablanca* case is closed.

GERALD PEARY

■ Gerald Peary is a visiting professor of film at Boston University's College of Communication.

Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry

By Duncan J. Petrie. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991. $35.00.

Though Duncan Petrie himself considers this book already slightly out-of-date, such a consideration seems entirely beside the point for a work that sets out to examine "film production in Britain in the late 1980s." That decade has closed, and with it the reign of Thatcherism. As Petrie's title suggests, the very interesting work created in Britain during the 1980s was accom-

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Derek Jarman, Terence Davies, Sally Potter, and Stephen Frears, among others, created a series of compelling and disruptive narratives that captured the imagination of viewers both in England and abroad. Yet at no time, it seems to me, did the decade enjoy the commercial and creative climate of free license endemic to British film-making in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the era of Richardson, Reisz, Furie, Lester, Losey, Francis, Fisher, and others. This is not to suggest that the accomplishments of British directors in the 1980s are less important or innovative, but it *should* be taken to mean that the work these later film-makers accomplished was often done in the face of political censorship, changing patterns in film distribution (video cassettes and television cutting in on theatrical distribution, for one example), and a national economy that forced directors to make do with less luxurious production circumstances and formats. This manifested itself in a number of ways.

Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), for example, was shot in 16mm; such an immediate compromise in visual quality would have been unthinkable in the 1960s. BBC and Thames video productions could be made quickly and cheaply with "live switching" and multiple camera usage. British viewers, forced to pay an ever increasing license fee for their television sets, began to stay home in droves rather than go out to the cinema. The big theatrical chains collapsed and were taken over by highly leveraged new concerns which ran the theaters with an eye toward the importation of big American hits to assure maximum patronage. Chris Menges' *A World Apart* (1988), for instance, cast American Barbara Hershey in a lead role, "to boost [the] film's box office potential" for overseas and domestic distribution.

Petrie gives us perhaps the definitive picture of a young generation of film artists—many of them financed through the efforts of Channel 4, the commercial British television network, or the British Film Institute's production fund—striving to make personal yet accessible films for a new group of cinemagoers. Unlike the members of previous audiences, the new film viewer in Britain who enjoys *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Davies' *The Long Day Closes* (1992), Potter's *The Gold Diggers* (1984), Menges' *A World Apart*, Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986), and other recent exemplars of British film-making may well be a theoretician and/or critic her/himself.

There is an economy of spirit and means, an austerity of vision and circumstance, that informs the construction of recent British film practice. Some of the more commercial films recently made in Britain, including Michael Caton-Jones' *Scandal* (1989) and James Ivory's *A Room with a View* (1986), are also examined in Petrie's text. Yet it is clear from his interviews with such artist/technicians as designer Christopher Hobbs and cinematographer Michael Coulter that Petrie sides with those who see film production as primarily a reflexive practice rather than merely the creation of a series of entertainments.

Of particular interest is Petrie's discussion of developments in cinema technology, including HDTV, Super-8mm transferred to videotape, 16mm, Super-16mm, and Betacam. These cheaper, lightweight formats have allowed the production of such highly experimental features as Jonnie Turpie's *Out of Order* (1988), Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990) and *The Last of England* (1987), and Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey's *The Bad Sister* (1983), among other films. Petrie also examines the nuts and bolts of "Sales, Distribution and Marketing" with great authority, and demonstrates how "pre-sales" decisions can often be crucial to the production, distribution, and reception of a film. All the major British production companies of the 1980s are thoroughly covered, including Handmade Films, Film Four International, Palace Films, Gavin Film, Goldcrest, and Working Title (all of which have gone through various permutations in their brief and turbulent careers).

Petrie's analysis of the essentially collaborative process of contemporary film production is also fresh and original, and a welcome respite from the slavish devotion to auteurism that permeates so much film criticism. Petrie himself worked as an assistant to the producer on Jarman's *The Garden*, in addition to his work as Research Officer for the BFI, so he has viewed much of the activity described in the book firsthand. This easy familiarity with his subject is reflected throughout the text. A complete index of films discussed, other works to consult, and a list of interviews make this the most erudite text to date on this important period in British cinema history.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon's most recent book is *The Early Film Criticism of François Truffaut* (Indiana University Press).

The Difficulty of Difference

Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference, and Film Theory

By D. N. Rodowick. Routledge, 1991. $37.50 cloth; $14.95 paper.

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feminist psychoanalytic film theory that he takes as his example, it is no surprise that he comes to the conclusion that as a result of misreading its primary sources, psychoanalytic film theory is dominated by a binary notion of "distinct, selfsame, and irreconcilably opposed gender categories." Thus, from this "logic based on sexual *opposition*," psychoanalytic film theory concerned with sexual difference is, says Rodowick, too often caught up in believing that "masculine and feminine identifications are decisively aligned with male and female spectators, and that the position of the female spectator can be defined ontogenetically in opposition to that of the male."

As an alternative to the speculative practice of charting spectatorial identification in these terms, Rodowick proposes a theory of critical reading in which the text/subject encounter would be regarded "as a potential site of resistance, reappropriation, and rereading" mediated by the historical moment. What is required of psychoanalytic film theory, he suggests, is an understanding of positions of identification only as potentialities and of desire as an entropic force "that continually erodes proper forms, producing contradiction in the texts themselves, and in spectators' relations with texts." To provide the means for understanding this process, Rodowick offers a redemptive reading of Freud on sexual difference, more specifically of Freud's much-cited essay "A Child Is Being Beaten," as the vehicle through which we might see that "what is at stake is understanding the development of specific positions for the sexuality of men and women through complex permutations of identification."

Interpreting Freud's essay as a revelation of the utopian function of fantasy in relation to the formation of sexual identity as a difference "based on transactions between, and erosions of culturally given norms of femininity and masculinity," Rodowick then offers a reading of Rivette's *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* (1974). He claims this reading is not an interpretation of the film but a demonstration of his ideal of a textual analysis, one that would relinquish an emphasis on the problem of spectatorial identification in favor of a critical analysis that takes up the task of articulating "the potentially utopian function of phantasy," that is, fantasy's representation of "a mostly inchoate desire that is utopian in the sense of its effort to dream possibilities of identity, sexuality, and pleasure unconstrained by norms of phallic division."

Rodowick certainly suggests many goals for psychoanalytic film theory with which it would be hard to argue: he says that what is needed is a theory of reading that is sensitive to historical difference in the cinema; he also calls for a sensitivity to what he describes as the fragile and fluid nature of sexual identity. But in contrast to the generally agreeable nature of such theoretical goals, there are some troubling contradictions and inconsistencies in Rodowick's proposed corrective measures.

In the first place, drive theory seems a curiously asocial (or pre-social) choice for a psychoanalytic theory foregrounding the importance of historical difference (and cultural influence). Somewhat predictably, since the reversibility of drives is important for establishing Rodowick's theoretical paradigm, drive reversal is presented as a given (citing the misleading example of love/hate), even though for Freud (and even more so for many post-Freudians), drive reversal is, like perverse fantasy, a complex and *conditional* activity. Rodowick confounds a number of analytic issues, both large and small, from splitting and repression as equivalent defenses to the relationship between perversion, desire, and fantasy (or must it be "phantasy"?). He suggests that "scenarios of negativity and loss . . . inform . . . all forms of phantasy life" to reveal the death drive. This appears to be a totalizing extension of the force field of masochistic fantasy reduced to its most "primeval psychological motivation" (to borrow from Robert Stoller). Yet Rodowick tells us that we should not consider masochism as a perversion but as an example of entropic desire revealing the operation of the death drive. However, I'm not quite sure how to suspend an awareness of a total symptomatology (although this kind of suspension appears to happen often enough in film theory).

I'm perplexed too about his emphasis on the death drive, since there is an implicit object relations theory embodied in his use of "A Child Is Being Beaten" that could be explored in different (and broader) directions. How is a totalizing notion like "entropic desire" going to further an ideologically and historically inflected theoretical practice? As powerfully suggestive as the notion of "utopian phantasy" may be, it seems to be quite idiosyncratically developed within Rodowick's attempt to formulate fantasy as a kind of ideological protest and anti-Oedipal rebellion, "especially against the socially given norms of identity." It is not clear that Rodowick's theory actually would allow us to get closer to a truly historically informed notion of subjectivity, one aligned either with or against those "socially given norms of identity."

Obviously, readers of *The Difficulty of Difference* should expect a committed rather than an objective reading of Freud, and Rodowick's redemptive rereading has a distinctly Lacanian spin as it works to fulfill its preconceived purpose vis-à-vis Freud. Rodowick's is a psychoanalytic conceptualization played out within a narrow framework of drives, conflicts, and defenses. It is psychoanalysis without the reality principle, without the ego, without a notion of the adaptive process of maturation, without any sense of desire mediating and maturing within the developmental process. Not only does Rodowick fail to acknowledge myriad potentialities for fantasy beyond those suggested by his model, but a curious and seemingly crucial elision occurs: assumed

rather than interrogated is the relationship of fantasy as an individual, primary-process-dominated form to cinema, a collective and obviously secondary-process-involved form.

Curious too, that rather than take up a reading of a textual product of the Hollywood "dream factory," which has provided the focus of so much of the psychoanalytic film theory with which he concerns himself, Rodowick chooses instead to analyze a Rivette film that seems so easily a confirmation of his thesis regarding fantasy as to be a triumph of textual obviousness. When Rodowick does discuss Hollywood film, the results are disappointing, as in his brief analysis of D. W. Griffith's *The Lonedale Operator* (a fantasy of castration) and in his comments on genre ("eloquent evidence" of the death drive).

Thus, in textual application as well as in psychoanalytic fundamentals, Rodowick ultimately fails to prove, at least by example, that psychoanalysis can, as he says, "contribute significantly to a historical and materialist analysis of mass culture." Yet however flawed it may be in this respect, Rodowick's book does raise important issues, and the investment of many film theorists in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis will no doubt guarantee interest in *The Difficulty of Difference.*

GAYLYN STUDLAR

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Le Double scénario chez Fritz Lang

By Gérard Leblanc and Brigitte Devisme. Paris: Armand Colin, 1991. N.p.

It would be hard to think of many rigorous analyses of the art of cinema that would themselves be more beautiful works of art than Gérard Leblanc and Brigitte Devisme's *Le Double scénario chez Fritz Lang,* a very close analysis of *The Big Heat.* With the shape and look (and price) of a coffee-table artbook—stunning in its design, striking in its imagery—*Le Double scénario* is an obvious labor of love. And the sheer impact of the book as book is matched by a sheer intensity of analysis (the text is Leblanc's; the graphics are Devisme's). Based on Lang's own papers, *Le Double scénario* fits a growing concern in French film studies to go beyond abstract theory and to use archives to tie analysis to precise historical research.

If, to take the immediate case, auteur criticism is at all to consider Fritz Lang a personal artist, this consideration now has to be established materially, positively. *Le Double scénario,* as its title might suggest, begins from the given of a screenplay adaptation (by Sydney Boehm) ordered by the studio but then offered to one of the directors privileged with rewrite rights. The doubleness is itself double: Lang writes a new script and then, in the actual directing of the film, he employs techniques of filmic writing to restructure the material once again.

It is this transformation of scenario that occupies Leblanc centrally. On the one hand, putting to shame the imprecisions of most studies of adaptation—which generally register changes but without explaining the extent to which they're systematic or not—Leblanc offers a marvelous typology of tactics of transformation, divided into category and subcategory. For example, Category 2, "Transformation by Suppression of a Scene," subdivides into four procedures: suppression of a secondary scene, suppression of a secondary scene coupled with the suppression of a character, suppression of a scene by transformation of another scene, suppression of a scene by creation of another.

On the other hand, Leblanc also goes directly to the texts and examines them closely and rigorously. Here, Brigitte Devisme's layout of the pages is wonderful: in several columns are splayed out the various script versions and shot-by-shot descriptions of the film itself, interspersed with frame enlargements, overhead plans of set-up and camera movement, Leblanc's own commentaries, and all of this further enriched and complicated by various graphic marks (shadowing, boxes, arrows, and so on) that help pinpoint overlaps and divergences from one version of the film to another. Here, directly, *Le Double scénario* most announces its separation from the standard coffee-table artbook; the details of Leblanc's analysis signal a rigour that can overwhelm any but the most dedicated researcher.

But the detail is necessary. Leblanc is able to argue that even seemingly minor transformations fit in with larger visions of the film. For example, when Lang rewrites Boehm's version of the visit of gangster moll Debby (Gloria Grahame) to the hotel room of Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford) so that Debby's vampiness is attenuated, and when Boehm then tries to write the vamp qualities back into the scene (with the seeming support of the producers), for Leblanc this is symptomatic of differences in overall conceptions of the film (Lang's Bannion is from the start colder, less sensitive, more driving than Boehm's, and there is no possibility of the Lang version of Bannion being vamped). Boehm's version ends with Debby shot by her gangster boyfriend but surviving to begin (so it is implied) a love affair with cop Bannion! Lang's rewrite (and filming) have Debby die while Bannion tells her of his assassinated wife. Where the Boehm version pushes the Hollywood fetish of the formation of the couple to an extreme, Lang's version rigor-

rather than interrogated is the relationship of fantasy as an individual, primary-process-dominated form to cinema, a collective and obviously secondary-process-involved form.

Curious too, that rather than take up a reading of a textual product of the Hollywood "dream factory," which has provided the focus of so much of the psychoanalytic film theory with which he concerns himself, Rodowick chooses instead to analyze a Rivette film that seems so easily a confirmation of his thesis regarding fantasy as to be a triumph of textual obviousness. When Rodowick does discuss Hollywood film, the results are disappointing, as in his brief analysis of D. W. Griffith's *The Lonedale Operator* (a fantasy of castration) and in his comments on genre ("eloquent evidence" of the death drive).

Thus, in textual application as well as in psychoanalytic fundamentals, Rodowick ultimately fails to prove, at least by example, that psychoanalysis can, as he says, "contribute significantly to a historical and materialist analysis of mass culture." Yet however flawed it may be in this respect, Rodowick's book does raise important issues, and the investment of many film theorists in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis will no doubt guarantee interest in *The Difficulty of Difference.*

GAYLYN STUDLAR

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Le Double scénario chez Fritz Lang

By Gérard Leblanc and Brigitte Devisme. Paris: Armand Colin, 1991. N.p.

It would be hard to think of many rigorous analyses of the art of cinema that would themselves be more beautiful works of art than Gérard Leblanc and Brigitte Devisme's *Le Double scénario chez Fritz Lang,* a very close analysis of *The Big Heat.* With the shape and look (and price) of a coffee-table artbook—stunning in its design, striking in its imagery—*Le Double scénario* is an obvious labor of love. And the sheer impact of the book as book is matched by a sheer intensity of analysis (the text is Leblanc's; the graphics are Devisme's). Based on Lang's own papers, *Le Double scénario* fits a growing concern in French film studies to go beyond abstract theory and to use archives to tie analysis to precise historical research.

If, to take the immediate case, auteur criticism is at all to consider Fritz Lang a personal artist, this consideration now has to be established materially, positively. *Le Double scénario,* as its title might suggest, begins from the given of a screenplay adaptation (by Sydney Boehm) ordered by the studio but then offered to one of the directors privileged with rewrite rights. The doubleness is itself double: Lang writes a new script and then, in the actual directing of the film, he employs techniques of filmic writing to restructure the material once again.

It is this transformation of scenario that occupies Leblanc centrally. On the one hand, putting to shame the imprecisions of most studies of adaptation—which generally register changes but without explaining the extent to which they're systematic or not—Leblanc offers a marvelous typology of tactics of transformation, divided into category and subcategory. For example, Category 2, "Transformation by Suppression of a Scene," subdivides into four procedures: suppression of a secondary scene, suppression of a secondary scene coupled with the suppression of a character, suppression of a scene by transformation of another scene, suppression of a scene by creation of another.

On the other hand, Leblanc also goes directly to the texts and examines them closely and rigorously. Here, Brigitte Devisme's layout of the pages is wonderful: in several columns are splayed out the various script versions and shot-by-shot descriptions of the film itself, interspersed with frame enlargements, overhead plans of set-up and camera movement, Leblanc's own commentaries, and all of this further enriched and complicated by various graphic marks (shadowing, boxes, arrows, and so on) that help pinpoint overlaps and divergences from one version of the film to another. Here, directly, *Le Double scénario* most announces its separation from the standard coffee-table artbook; the details of Leblanc's analysis signal a rigour that can overwhelm any but the most dedicated researcher.

But the detail is necessary. Leblanc is able to argue that even seemingly minor transformations fit in with larger visions of the film. For example, when Lang rewrites Boehm's version of the visit of gangster moll Debby (Gloria Grahame) to the hotel room of Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford) so that Debby's vampiness is attenuated, and when Boehm then tries to write the vamp qualities back into the scene (with the seeming support of the producers), for Leblanc this is symptomatic of differences in overall conceptions of the film (Lang's Bannion is from the start colder, less sensitive, more driving than Boehm's, and there is no possibility of the Lang version of Bannion being vamped). Boehm's version ends with Debby shot by her gangster boyfriend but surviving to begin (so it is implied) a love affair with cop Bannion! Lang's rewrite (and filming) have Debby die while Bannion tells her of his assassinated wife. Where the Boehm version pushes the Hollywood fetish of the formation of the couple to an extreme, Lang's version rigor-

ously maintains its concern for the inexorable quest for vengeance and for the invulnerability of the law even to the temptations of love.

To read the film in terms of such themes—no matter how linked to specific details—is obviously to offer an interpretation. Significantly, though, Leblanc situates his study under the sign of objectivity. As he says in the book's short theoretical conclusion, "Nothing has been offered [in this book] whose source was not locatable in the documents used. . . . The interpretation never strays from the facts. However, a positivism, even an expanded one, is not the philosophy that directs this work. To stick to the facts is not to remain a prisoner of them." (220)

Certainly, though, it is not facts that determine interpretation. In interpretation, there has to come a moment where, no matter how many facts one has accumulated, one has to leap beyond the factual and impose a hypothetical system. Beyond the attractions of a rigorous and positivist study of script to screen transformations, *Le Double scénario* offers auteurist criticism in all its intensity. For example, like Paul Jenkins in his *Fritz Lang: The Image and the Look,* Leblanc reads many of the details of *The Big Heat* in terms of a dialectic of seeing and obscurity. Beyond the explicit concern of its genre to picture the quest to pierce obfuscations in order to arrive at a juridical truth, *The Big Heat* becomes, in such an optic, a meditation on a simulacral world, a world in which human beings hide the immoralities of character behind clever strategies of social facade. In line with recent studies that see the narratives of films as allegories of their own production (see various writings, for instance, of Fredric Jameson and David James), *Le Double scénario* will even argue at one point that *The Big Heat*'s story of a loner trying to fight the odds is an allegory of Lang's own adventures as Hollywood director: "Bannion's position in the fiction doubles Lang's in his relation to the genre (and to Columbia Pictures)." (214)

An auteurist study today could probably go no further than *Le Double scénario.* For anyone who wants to proceed in the direction of authorial interpretation, this book will no doubt set a standard for rigour while showing how that rigour can operate in the service of cinephilic love.

DANA POLAN

■ Dana Polan teaches at the University of Pittsburgh.

The Geopolitical Aesthetic

Cinema and Space in the World System

By Fredric Jameson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. $25.00.

This book is Fredric Jameson's second collection of essays on film, following rather quickly on *Signatures of the Visible.* Unlike that earlier compendium, all the essays here were completed after the publication of Jameson's oft-cited 1984 essay, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," and all are part of Jameson's efforts to build a coherent statement about culture's reflection of the political economy of postmodernity. The title and subtitle reveal Jameson's concern: he is interested in cinema's portrayal of the supranational nature of late capitalism that gives postmodernity its identity, in the ways in which the cinema's handling of space allegorizes not only this "geopolitical" identity but also our sense of ourselves as subjects, and, finally, in the total system of global commodification.

A couple of issues present themselves quickly as the reader confronts this book. The first is, of course, Jameson's difficult, reticulate prose. Some introductions to Jameson's work have included rationales for his style (Colin MacCabe takes up that chore here), and after becoming familiar with Jameson one might see his writing as the reflection of a strongly dialectical mind able to respond to the contradictions to each idea as it is conceived. Difficult style might, after all, be the curse of critical theory, or perhaps academic writing in general, if we follow the carping of many current philistines. Still, a type of criticism that asks us to see the political worth of cultural analysis might develop a style inviting to more than just a highly specialized academic audience. Jameson's dense, very allusive prose (with relatively few notes attached) assumes a great deal of erudition on the part of the audience.

Another issue is Jameson's subject matter and strategy. Since he is focused on the geopolitical situation of transnational corporatism, his sampling of films from the United States, Canada, Taiwan, France, Russia, and the Philippines seems reasonable on the face of it. But there isn't a real sense (beyond Jameson's inquiry as to whether or not a marginal or adversarial or "Third World" cinema can in fact exist in the global system) why some rather inaccessible films (Yang's *The Terrorizer,* Tahimik's *The Perfumed Nightmare*) can be seen as representing dominant tendencies of the culture of postmodernity. Jameson does suggest that the thorough infiltration of corporate culture into postcolonial societies makes prob-

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lematical the idea of this or that national cinema being more representative or inventive in its reflection of postmodernity. Yet any implication that Jameson's choice of films is arbitrary is belied by his interest (very evident in his discussions of Russian and Filipino cinema) in the precise relationship of national identity to the postmodern situation. When Jameson analyzes many of these films, however, he frequently restates his arguments, which indeed could be applied to virtually *any* film of the past two decades: the totalizing anomie and displacement of the subject might be said to be as central to *Repo Man*, *River's Edge*, *Terminator 2*, and *To Live and Die in L.A.* as to *Days of Eclipse* or *The Terrorizer*, even as Jameson wants to make specific national claims about non-Western films to prove his point about the effects of late capitalism.

Jameson's opening chapter on the conspiracy cinema is his most compelling, but it has only little bearing on the rest of the essays. (Part of the problem here is that this is a collection of papers presented over several years that Jameson wants us to read as a book. The overarching argument to make us do so—the problem of representing social existence in the global system—is hard to glimpse in the thicket of his prose.)

For Jameson, the John F. Kennedy assassination and its representation in media is a paradigmatic moment, an epistemological break that made the populace of the West question its ability to know, rather than merely believe or sense, truth. This issue—of the worth of empirical data in opening up a wider social/political reality—was introduced very notably in *Blow-Up* (a picture that is a keystone in many respects for Jameson's understanding of a new paranoia), but has greater consequence in films explicitly about political conspiracy. Jameson's application of his argument to David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* is forceful, not least because Cronenberg is indeed recognizable by now as a postmodern chronicler *par excellence*. The massive media/corporate/ polymorphous perverse conspiracy that overtakes protagonist James Woods (wittily nicknamed by Jameson the "Bogart of the postmodern scene") is largely an allegory of the facelessness of corporate-state power and its construction and penetration (literal in Cronenberg's rendering) of the subject. Using A. J. Greimas's narratological formula, Jameson discusses the protagonist's inability to resemble good guy or bad guy anymore or to act upon or accomplish anything except to be a nexus for the internecine ideological conflict that can only be regarded, as it is in Cronenberg, metaphorically and parodically, given the impossibility of opposing the dominant order or even of understanding postmodern power.

Jameson's insistence on the theme of space in his discussion of *Three Days of the Condor*, *The Parallax View*, and *All the President's Men* seems at times a conceit that causes him to sidestep both the generic conventions of these films and some of their rather humdrum political ideas. A discussion of the "absent" power of *All the President's Men* (Nixon, a figure of the corporate state, is not seen until the end, and then only on TV) and its dislocating sense of space (but didn't Welles make similar use of vast, alienating office interiors and exteriors?) misses the conventionality of this version of Watergate, a version that permits a neat closure with the downfall of Nixon. While Jameson notes that the *Washington Post* reporters are as unpleasant or brutal as the people they investigate, this attention to the film's concept of subjectivity does little to suggest its real lack of importance as political thriller or emblem of the post-modern moment. Jameson's focus on the metaphorical function of the conspiracy thriller, its representation of general shifts in the consciousness of the polity rather than the cinema's analysis of state crimes, is a bit disconcerting. When he says "Nothing is gained by having been persuaded of the definitive verisimilitude of this or that conspiratorial hypothesis," one asks if Jameson really believes in the political worth of cultural analysis—he certainly thinks little of a rigorous study of the clandestine state and its motives.

Perhaps Jameson's belief in the political efficacy of criticism is best represented in the grandiosity of his ambition, in the great shifts in topic and method, and in the attempted comprehensiveness of his strategy in a 220-page book. His ambitions are supported by a fine sense of the complexities of film language, but are undercut by a recurring escape-hatch rhetoric that resorts regularly to phrases such as "something like" ("something like a corporate structure," "something like an arbitrary decision") that too frequently sound like equivocation. Jameson is at his most persuasive in describing how the wasteland of the post-Soviet state conflates a rather typical Russian bleakness and absurdism with science fiction (since the postsocialist world is now opened up to the science-fiction dystopia of the West), or how a postcolonial subject is fascinated, repelled, and subsumed by NASA technology and postmodern architectural space.

A charge frequently levelled at Jameson's film criticism is that it is reductionist, a charge I would suggest emanates in part from a growing disdain for Marxist analysis. Anyone familiar with Jameson knows that his Marxism is strongly inclusive and hardly vulgar. It seems to me that his work these days is perhaps not political *enough*; he loses focus on the political (and aesthetic) consequence of a film in rather labored exegeses of the workings of metaphors and allegories. Like Robin Wood, he tends to bypass egregious problems in a film in order to make a (often very arguable) point (never simply made) about its place in the postmodern ideological spectrum. Jameson might take a lesson from Wood, however, in concentrating on a film's radicality, on the degree to

which it expresses authentic political commitment. Jameson's concern for a film's ability to show split-hair ideological shifts and nuances gets him involved in pedantry, since *all* cultural products always contain this ability. Although it may be a function of the epoch he is now describing, there is the sense in his film criticism that Jameson cannot argue fervently about a film's political progressiveness (or reaction), for all of his concern for film as a site of resistance, as evidence of a utopian space, and consequently his arguments tend to become enervating. It is obvious, however, that critics interested in the application of criticism to issues of social justice will continue to find Jameson useful. At the "end of history," when the Frankfurt School and the ideals of Western Marxism have fallen so far out of fashion, Jameson's will remain a laudable project.

CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

■ Christopher Sharrett teaches at Seton Hall University.

Illuminating Shadows

The Mythic Power of Film

By Geoffrey Hill. Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1992. $17.00.

In *Illuminating Shadows*, Jungian psychotherapist Geoffrey Hill asserts that movies fulfill our ancient yearnings toward the numinous in a godless, technologically obsessed age. Far more than ephemeral entertainment, the "*cinema sophia*" he celebrates purportedly can spur spiritual transformations and archetypal insights at the Bijou. In the theater's darkness, the discriminating rational ego is lulled, so that we "allow ourselves to be taken over by a spell . . . as real and potent as the trance state of the primitive. . . . " Cinema is "our shrine, our house of worship, and our prayer room . . . a tribal rallying hall" where we communicate with the perennial wisdom of the collective unconscious. (20)

In his introduction, Hill sketches the contributions of other critical approaches. Despite a show of evenhandedness, he hardly touches upon how these might usefully supplement cinematic myth theory. With the exception of phenomenology, he views alternate strategies in the main as so much base metal antecedent to the refinement of his own golden summum bonum. Hill's thinking is chiefly tutored by Jung, Eliade, and Frye. His project deploys "tools and ideas about cyclical analysis, the concept of time, archetypes, symbology, numerology, colors, names . . . the signification of places, colors, movement, and opposites—especially masculine and feminine."

The body of *Illuminating Shadows* addresses 17 films, grouped under the categories of *Masculine Monsters*, *Feminine Monsters*, and *Unorthodox Messiahs and Seeing*. With the obvious exception of Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre*, the selection eschews movies with obvious mythic content (e.g., the Cinecittà sword-and-sandal epics), or with deliberate mythological resonances (e.g., Dassin's *Phaedra*). Hill rightly believes that films whose mythic substructure has crystallized outside the creators' awareness may reveal more about subconscious archetypal processing.

No Jungian *grand syntagma* will be found in this book: Hill's efforts rather constitute a broad sampling of myth-critical possibility, Jungian *belle-lettres*, as it were. The essays generally rate on the downside of uneven. It is Hill's skill, but also too frequently his undoing, to discern primal legend embedded in unlikely fare. He can persuasively demonstrate that visionary heroes in *Field of Dreams* and *Repo Man* recapitulate ancient prophetic tradition by virtue of their apparently demented demeanor and tutelary function. Rather than viewing mythic content as existing sub specie aeternitatis—an unfortunate proclivity of many myth critics—Hill often grounds his analyses in the personal and historical circumstances surrounding a film's construction. For instance, his insight into the influence of Schrader's Calvinism upon Travis Bickle's purgatory in *Taxi Driver* is exemplary.

But Hill's successes are overbalanced by his penchant for invoking, then defending, rank implausibilities. Thus, *The Little Shop of Horror*'s sadistic dentist is nominated as a stand-in for "the tri*dent*-bearing god of the sea"—a typical example wherein Hill believes he has made an unlikely case by merely citing some mythic reference, or backing his assertion up with evidence which stretches credibility past the breaking point: "The dentist's addiction to his nitrous oxide gas mask makes him look like a scuba diver . . . as befits his underwater role as Poseidon. . . . " (168)

To the Jungian naïf, this sort of questionable arcana bears as much freight as the phallic symbols naïve Freudians regularly find strewn across the artistic landscape. Cogent discourse also too frequently gives way to exasperating numerological "proofs." Hill's analysis of *It's a Wonderful Life* interprets Henry Potter as Satanic tempter to a Christ-like George Bailey. Hill concludes: "[T]he joke on the Evil One is that in stealing the building and loan's eight thousand dollars, he forgets that eight is the number of new beginnings." (83)

Questions of aesthetics do not interest Hill overmuch; films of high or low aesthetic merit win equal accord on the basis of their mythical content alone. Many worthy issues consequently elude his attention—for instance, why some film-makers succeed where others fail at forging a valid allegorical underpinning to their work.

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Hill counts himself a feminist, but his book is chockablock with gendered essentialism, references to the eternally passive feminine, and so forth. A concluding overview of the sexual polarities within current film theory goes well and truly overboard: Hill sees the masculine "hardness" of structuralism and semiotics pitted against the "softer," more user-friendly feminine discourses of realism and phenomenology; a healing reconciliation of aggressive animus and generative anima hopefully waits in the wings for critics as well as our beleaguered society. Doubtless these conclusions were drawn with the best of humanistic intentions, but they will surely make many scholars, feminist or otherwise, grind their teeth.

In sum, Hill's studies rarely achieve the elegance and sophistication of John Beebe's seminal investigations (see his "The Notorious Postwar Psyche," in the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 18, no. 1, and "At the Movies: Alfred Hitchcock, 1899-1980," in the *San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3). But there is still enough gold here to abide the dross. I have often argued for an ecumenical psychoanalytic film theory, particularly the need for more work in the myth-critical canon. In the context of the field's lack of strong material, *Illuminating Shadows*, however flawed, does make a useful contribution.

HARVEY R. GREENBERG

■ Harvey R. Greenberg's latest book is *Screen Memories: Hollywood Cinema on the Psychoanalytic Couch* (Columbia University Press).

The Illusion of Life

Essays on Animation

Edited by Alan Cholodenko. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (fall) 1993. $19.95.

Academic study of animation, apart from literally a handful of scholarly works, established itself as a distinct critical project only in the late 1980s. Subsequent development, though, has proceeded quickly, although no systematic critical approach to animation has yet emerged. This publication, drawing on the proceedings of the first international conference on animation theory (held in Sydney, Australia, at the Power Institute for the Fine Arts in 1988), represents a collective effort to redress that relative dearth. It includes a lengthy introduction by editor Alan Cholodenko, eight essays representing conference papers or revisions of papers, two essays written expressly for this volume, and a transcription of animator Chuck Jones' closing talk. The collection is unique in uniformly adhering to a postmodern, poststructuralist orientation.

The volume's dominant metaphor derives jointly from the in-betweening process (the drawing of a figure's intermediate positions from one key position to the next) and from master animator Norman McLaren's definition of animation: "Animation is not the art of drawings-that-move, but rather the art of movements-that-are-drawn. What happens *between* each frame is more important than what happens *on* each frame." It must be stressed that "metaphor" is the operative term here. "Animation," moreover, refers not exclusively to animated film but rather to any process of "bringing to life." Thus, the cinema itself becomes subsumed under the heading of animation (as, historically and ontologically, it arguably should), as do other types of vivification.

This means that five essays have little or nothing to with animation as traditionally construed. Robyn Ferrell's "Life-Threatening Life: Angela Carter and the Uncanny" applies Freud's notion of the uncanny to Carter's fantasy book, *The Magic Toyshop,* and the film version of it. Rosalyn Diprose and Cathryn Vasseleu consider the language and conceptualizations used in discussing AIDS in science writing and science fiction in "Animation—AIDS in Science/Fiction."

In "The Workshop of Filthy Animation," Peter Hutchings, taking "animation" to mean "bringing the dead to life," applies Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the movies *Blade Runner*, *The Terminator*, and *Robocop*—but, oddly enough, ignores the films' special-effects (genuine) animation. Lisa Trahair's "For the Noise of a Fly" discusses horror films and their remakes (in particular, *The Fly*) from a Baudrillardian perspective. Edward Colless and David Kelly in "Mosaic Infinity" use the Aleph and the Zahir from Jorge Luis Borges' fictions as emblems of the critically aware reader.

Cholodenko's introduction attempts to position these essays as links between the theorization of animation and the theorization of the rest of the world, but, worthy as such a project may be, the volume—and the reader interested in theories of animated film—would have been better served with more essays dealing specifically with animation in the narrow sense.

The remaining essays, which do concentrate on animated film, often become so involved in their applications of Derrida, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Benjamin, and Lacan that they sometimes ignore what actually appears on the screen. Philip Brophy's otherwise excellent essay on sound in Disney and Warner Bros. cartoons, "The Animation of Sound," for example, is flawed by a series of observational errors. It nonetheless remains an impor-

Hill counts himself a feminist, but his book is chockablock with gendered essentialism, references to the eternally passive feminine, and so forth. A concluding overview of the sexual polarities within current film theory goes well and truly overboard: Hill sees the masculine "hardness" of structuralism and semiotics pitted against the "softer," more user-friendly feminine discourses of realism and phenomenology; a healing reconciliation of aggressive animus and generative anima hopefully waits in the wings for critics as well as our beleaguered society. Doubtless these conclusions were drawn with the best of humanistic intentions, but they will surely make many scholars, feminist or otherwise, grind their teeth.

In sum, Hill's studies rarely achieve the elegance and sophistication of John Beebe's seminal investigations (see his "The Notorious Postwar Psyche," in the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 18, no. 1, and "At the Movies: Alfred Hitchcock, 1899-1980," in the *San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3). But there is still enough gold here to abide the dross. I have often argued for an ecumenical psychoanalytic film theory, particularly the need for more work in the myth-critical canon. In the context of the field's lack of strong material, *Illuminating Shadows*, however flawed, does make a useful contribution.

HARVEY R. GREENBERG

■ Harvey R. Greenberg's latest book is *Screen Memories: Hollywood Cinema on the Psychoanalytic Couch* (Columbia University Press).

The Illusion of Life

Essays on Animation

Edited by Alan Cholodenko. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (fall) 1993. $19.95.

Academic study of animation, apart from literally a handful of scholarly works, established itself as a distinct critical project only in the late 1980s. Subsequent development, though, has proceeded quickly, although no systematic critical approach to animation has yet emerged. This publication, drawing on the proceedings of the first international conference on animation theory (held in Sydney, Australia, at the Power Institute for the Fine Arts in 1988), represents a collective effort to redress that relative dearth. It includes a lengthy introduction by editor Alan Cholodenko, eight essays representing conference papers or revisions of papers, two essays written expressly for this volume, and a transcription of animator Chuck Jones' closing talk. The collection is unique in uniformly adhering to a postmodern, poststructuralist orientation.

The volume's dominant metaphor derives jointly from the in-betweening process (the drawing of a figure's intermediate positions from one key position to the next) and from master animator Norman McLaren's definition of animation: "Animation is not the art of drawings-that-move, but rather the art of movements-that-are-drawn. What happens *between* each frame is more important than what happens *on* each frame." It must be stressed that "metaphor" is the operative term here. "Animation," moreover, refers not exclusively to animated film but rather to any process of "bringing to life." Thus, the cinema itself becomes subsumed under the heading of animation (as, historically and ontologically, it arguably should), as do other types of vivification.

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tant work against which to measure other studies on the music/image relationship in animated films.

Keith Clancy's "ΠΡΗΣΤΗΡ: The T(r)opology of Pyromania" and Keith Broadfoot and Rex Butler's "The Illusion of Illusion" both attempt to rewrite Gilles Deleuze's non-discussion of animation (in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*) in theorizing about motion in animated films. Clancy additionally uses Borges' fiction and Herakleitos' ideas on flux to approach *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, and Broadfoot and Butler adduce Benjamin and Derrida in discussing pre-cinematic animation devices and the projects of Pollock's action paintings and Monet's sequential paintings in relation to animation. Both essays command the reader's attention, though both become entoiled in their own rhetoric. Broadfoot and Butler's essay, moreover, makes some unfortunate factual errors (if Leland Stanford did in fact wager on the position of a galloping horse's hooves, it was not with Eadweard Muybridge, as the authors claim), though these appear in passages which remain ancillary to their arguments.

Ben Crawford's "Saturday Morning Fever" looks at Saturday morning cartoon fare and its audience and presents valid objections to those commentators who contend that cartoon violence has a deleterious effect on young viewers.

"*Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, or the Framing of Animation," by Alan Cholodenko, presents a dense close reading of that film, informed, like Cholodenko's introduction, by a wealth of contemporary critical writing (albeit chiefly Derrida and Baudrillard). Though a rewarding application, this essay becomes too enmeshed in its own language. Relying heavily on the "in-between" metaphor, Cholodenko repeatedly asserts that X "is and is not" Y until one wonders about the productivity of this line of criticism. On the whole, however, Cholodenko approaches his subject with such conviction and erudition that his arguments almost sway the reader into accepting certain anomalies in the film as having a significance beyond that of mere lapses in continuity.

Although one could have wished for more essays dealing directly with animated film, *The Illusion of Life* firmly positions itself, albeit by default, as the preeminent book in print on contemporary theory as applied to animation. It also heralds (and argues) the arrival of animation studies as a valid discipline equal to and separate from cinema studies but with a wealth of critical practice relevant to cinema scholars as well as animation scholars.

RICHARD J. LESKOSKY

■ Richard J. Leskosky is Assistant Director of the Unit for Cinema Studies of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Inside the Film Factory

New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema

Edited by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie. New York: Routledge, 1991. $39.95.

When I interviewed the elderly Kuleshov back in the 1960s about his formative years and the sources of his cinematic montage and actors' stunt training, Kuleshov acknowledged the influence of two Western names, Dalcroze and Delsarte. Those names rang no bell with me, and I did not pursue the matter further.

This is just one of countless neglected topics in the youth and adolescence of Russian and/or Soviet film that has long cried out for study during several decades when enthusiasts of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovzhenko were reasonably well supplied with articles and books by and about the Holy Trinity of Soviet Cinema. This deep but narrow focus on the anointed few continued until the past couple of decades, which are yielding a new current of revisionist scholarship that approaches its subject through much more scrupulous research in primary language sources.

The new generation enjoys access to long unavailable films directed by non-canonical names like Barnet and Protazanov, and even dozens of tsarist films predating the Communist Revolution and thus proscribed for public showing since shortly after 1917. Among revisionist scholars, Richard Taylor, of the University College of Swansea, is emerging as one of, if not first among, the leading figures. His valuable work over the last dozen years, often in the capacity of translator/editor, has made available much new information on Russian and/or Soviet film.

Teaming up for the second time with Ian Christie of the British Film Institute, Taylor now brings out another excellent book of articles (some of them previously published). Probably the most novel, eye-opening of the essays in *Inside the Film Factory* is Mikhail Yampolski's study of the sources of Kuleshov's training of stunt actors and his valuation of movement and position on the screen. We learn that the symbolic valuation of movement, even its mechanization of robotization, goes back to Dalcroze and Delsarte, French and Swiss theorists of the "anthropology of acting" at the turn of the twentieth century. Kuleshov picked up their theories through their Russian proponents, Prince Volkonski and Ilin and Gardin of the Moscow Film School (VGIK). So now we know.

Another fascinating article is J. Hoberman's on the production and reception of Soviet Yiddish-minority films in the silent and early sound era, with six pages devoted to one film, *Return of Nathan Becker* (1932),

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about the return from the U.S.A. of a Jewish immigrant to participate in the "heroic construction" of the Five-Year Plans. Another very informative article comes from Yuri Tsivian; writing about the medieval years of film in Russia, Tsivian quotes early texts about Protazanov's directing of actors, especially his creation of emotional pauses and slowing-down of reactions. Protazanov's post-1924 career is covered by Denise Youngblood, revealing that Protazanov was at the same time the most hated (among the small coterie of young avant-gardists) and the most loved of Soviet directors (among actors and with the general, ticket-buying public). A third piece relating to the Protazanov rediscovery is Christie's study of *Aelita* (1924), the science-fiction super-production long unseen in the West. Christie links the film to its source novel, by A. N. Tolstoi, and to stage and literary trends of the time.

Two other directors represented in this volume are Medvedkin and Barnet. The career interview with documentary satirist Alexander Medvedkin (1900–1989) is probably the most predictable and "orthodox-Soviet" piece, in terms of content, in this book, but still it's mostly new material. French critic Bernard Eisenschitz contributes a fresh, casual, down-to-earth survey of the career of a fresh, casual, down-to-earth director, Boris Barnet (1902–1965), with much discussion of his little-known films after the 1933 classic, *Outskirts*.

Quite different in approach is the careful, thorough, meticulous American historian Vance Kepley, who contributes two (reprinted) economically angled studies—on Soviet film studios, financing, production, and distribution in the 1920s, and on the import and reception in Russia of Griffith's *Intolerance*. Christie's second article surveys the theoretic and artistic challenges of the transition to sound in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and points out some fascinating examples where the "disadvantage" of needing translation, a sound track, and subtitles was ingeniously converted to an artistic advantage by the incorporation of the language barrier and translation problems into the story line itself. And co-editor Taylor, in a balanced reexamination of the man who between 1930 and 1938 tried to industrialize and "Hollywoodize" the cottage industry that Soviet cinema had been up to that time, describes how studio head Shumiatski had to cope with the nearly overwhelming problems of converting to sound without foreign exchange to pay for the necessary hardware, of reining in free-spending, loose-cannon directors, and of trying to keep his political balance in the midst of bloody purges (he failed, losing his job, and, soon thereafter, his life, in 1938).

The book's documentation, editing, and translations are careful and accurate. It has 26 interesting, full-page illustrations and several good-quality "stills," although a number are smudgy reproductions from old publications or film frames. To confirm the scholarly nature of the volume, it has 650 footnotes. As in almost any big book, we find misspellings and mistransliterations, but, overall, Taylor and Christie's book is a solid winner, a real contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the early and middle decades of Russian and/or Soviet cinema.

STEVEN P. HILL

■ Steven P. Hill teaches in the Slavic Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The Many Lives of the Batman

Critical Approaches to a Superhero and His Media

Edited by Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio. New York: Routledge/BFI, 1991. $39.50 cloth; $13.95 paper.

Since the efforts by Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco to decipher the narrative structure, logic, and ideology of mythic figures in post-World War II popular culture, critical analysis of contemporary cultural forms has undergone some significant transformations.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Richard Dyer's work on film stars underscored the importance of understanding film in terms of its relation to other cultural forms and the importance of wedding the textual analysis of literary and film criticism to more sociological issues. Also in the early 1980s, John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado's book-length analysis of the television figure Dr. Who attempted to bring together issues concerning the complex textual relations among character, star, and serialized narrative with issues concerning the production and viewing of this hero. By the mid-1980s, Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott's examination of the "Bond phenomenon" demonstrated and conceptualized how the meaning, significance, pleasure, and ideology of a popular figure such as Bond results from multiple agents and varying conditions, how the figure itself operates as a catalyst for producing and reproducing the relations between industry, narrative, and viewing practices, and in this sense how the figure of Bond *emerged within* but also *produced* historical and cultural "formations." Like Dyer's work on stars, their study also encouraged a rethinking of central assumptions in both literary and film criticism.

But while Bennett and Woollacott were interested in tracing the circulation of a popular hero across various media, they generally ignored how cultural production

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But while Bennett and Woollacott were interested in tracing the circulation of a popular hero across various media, they generally ignored how cultural production

since the 1950s has increasingly tended, on one hand, toward multimedia "tie-ins" and, on the other, toward demographically oriented and narrowcasted production. In some respects, Pearson and Uricchio's collection of essays more directly attempts to situate the meaning, popularity, and cultural significance of Batman within these changing patterns of production and consumption, within a changing cultural aesthetic, and within specific reading formations. And to do so, it brings to bear various forms of analysis (e.g., historical, textual, sociological, ethnographic, and political economy). But while its "interdisciplinary" style aligns it with the lineage of critical studies about popular figures, the book's emphasis upon the "multiple and heterogenous" ways of understanding Batman and of forming identifications also attests to the slipperiness of the concept of "the popular" and the way in which media and cultural criticism has been shaped by a changing media and cultural environment given to narrowcasting and tie-ins.

In order to highlight the numerous manifestations of "Batness" or "being-Bat," this book offers interviews with some of the individuals most associated with the production of comic books about Batman, ethnographic glosses of film audiences and readers of Batman comic books, and discussions of fan groups and of the perspective of gay audiences. There is, however, a sharp and unreconciled difference between those contributors who see multiplicity, fragmentation, and heterogeneity everywhere they find Batman and those who recognize that various formations, readings, pleasures, etc., do get *institutionalized* and are *constrained* by a variety of factors. Here I am thinking about the unresolved disparity between Eileen Meehan's essay, which deftly calls attention to how media industries have reorganized to coordinate viewing and consuming practices, and Lynn Spigel and Henry Jenkins' conclusion that audiences continually redefine and "re-member" Batman, or Jim Collins' effort to understand Batman as an example of "meta-pop"—a term he uses to refer to contemporary popular culture's rampantly recombinant practices that obviate generic coherence or stability.

A similar disparity can also be found in the unreconciled way that audiences, consumers, and fans are discussed. Again, because the Meehan essay pushes the issue of industry tie-ins and demographic marketing, it becomes crucial to avoid equating fandom with empowerment, since this fails both to acknowledge the increasingly complex relation between media targeting and taste cultures and to distinguish among the kinds of affective alliance and cultural production described by terms such as "audience," "consumer," and "fan."

Certainly the questions this book raises about how meaning and social identity are both constrained *and* reformulated are what make it a valuable contribution to media and cultural studies. But the editors make relatively little attempt to conceptualize carefully how these essays might contribute to our understanding of Batman's *historic* role in the formation of ideologies, allegiances, and alliances. The precariousness of their project, in this respect, is that either all of contemporary culture ends up getting read through the Batman narrative, or Batman's historic relation to other figures and cultural practices gets lost. Batman may be the example par excellence of polysemy and postmodernity, but the Batman narrative itself appears relatively self-contained—something that could have been addressed by the editors, particularly since they do want to consider Batman's role in contemporary cultural politics.

If this book about the legacy of Batman is a testament to the state of critical media studies and cultural studies in the United States, then it bears some responsibility to explain how the issues raised by previous studies of popular figures need to be rethought. There is also, as Meaghan Morris and others have suggested, a danger not only that cultural studies in the U.S. may end up implying that textual reformulation always equals ideological resistance but that the entire issue of power and politics may end up getting trivialized when such strong expressions as "hijacking" refer only to the continual reworking of elements from earlier Batman narratives. If the continual reformulation of the Batman story is implicated in the reproduction of culture, through historically and geographically specific industry, narrative, and viewing customs, then it seems crucial to address the political significance and stakes of these practices and the implications of changing them.

JAMES HAY

■ James Hay teaches media and cultural studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Media Events

The Live Broadcasting of History

By Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. $29.50 cloth.

Powerful social chemistry happens when great public events are transmitted live, direct, instantly to television screens in millions of homes. A public ceremonial is transformed into a unique, singularly potent community of the moment when it is electronically transferred from the agora to the stage of television's "great

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A similar disparity can also be found in the unreconciled way that audiences, consumers, and fans are discussed. Again, because the Meehan essay pushes the issue of industry tie-ins and demographic marketing, it becomes crucial to avoid equating fandom with empowerment, since this fails both to acknowledge the increasingly complex relation between media targeting and taste cultures and to distinguish among the kinds of affective alliance and cultural production described by terms such as "audience," "consumer," and "fan."

Certainly the questions this book raises about how meaning and social identity are both constrained *and* reformulated are what make it a valuable contribution to media and cultural studies. But the editors make relatively little attempt to conceptualize carefully how these essays might contribute to our understanding of Batman's *historic* role in the formation of ideologies, allegiances, and alliances. The precariousness of their project, in this respect, is that either all of contemporary culture ends up getting read through the Batman narrative, or Batman's historic relation to other figures and cultural practices gets lost. Batman may be the example par excellence of polysemy and postmodernity, but the Batman narrative itself appears relatively self-contained—something that could have been addressed by the editors, particularly since they do want to consider Batman's role in contemporary cultural politics.

If this book about the legacy of Batman is a testament to the state of critical media studies and cultural studies in the United States, then it bears some responsibility to explain how the issues raised by previous studies of popular figures need to be rethought. There is also, as Meaghan Morris and others have suggested, a danger not only that cultural studies in the U.S. may end up implying that textual reformulation always equals ideological resistance but that the entire issue of power and politics may end up getting trivialized when such strong expressions as "hijacking" refer only to the continual reworking of elements from earlier Batman narratives. If the continual reformulation of the Batman story is implicated in the reproduction of culture, through historically and geographically specific industry, narrative, and viewing customs, then it seems crucial to address the political significance and stakes of these practices and the implications of changing them.

JAMES HAY

■ James Hay teaches media and cultural studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Media Events

The Live Broadcasting of History

By Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. $29.50 cloth.

Powerful social chemistry happens when great public events are transmitted live, direct, instantly to television screens in millions of homes. A public ceremonial is transformed into a unique, singularly potent community of the moment when it is electronically transferred from the agora to the stage of television's "great

hall," as the late Bud Benjamin of CBS News called the interconnected vastness of national and worldwide TV. A domestic audience of 200 million and a global audience of more than twice that "attended" upon such media events as the Kennedy funeral and the Apollo XI moon mission.

Dayan and Katz argue that this partnership of actors on a public stage, electronic communicators, and an audience transfixed at the tube-face comprises far more than another voyeuristic "show" and has reverberations that resound long after the spectacle ends. In fact, these historic moments could not have happened *without* television.

It is the character of these televised public spectacles that the authors set out to define, classify, and examine in *Media Events*. In so doing, they recognize a phenomenon that transcends the status of mere "pseudo-event," in Boorstin's dismissive phrase.

Instead, they see televised media events as "festive viewing," as a new and unique "narrative genre" that bonds and authenticates society, that arrests and deflects the viewer from his or her daily routine, that "commands attention universally and simultaneously in order to tell a primordial story about current affairs." The most dramatic of these events "appear at moments of crisis and speak to a conflict that threatens society," such as the Kennedy funeral or the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia.

The authors argue that it is the mediating "addition of the broadcaster as a third party to the contract" between the event sponsors and the audience "that most clearly differentiates media events from public ceremonies prior to the era of radio and television." These dramas inhabit the grey area between "play and reality." With the baton of a video director's flamboyance, they are translated into an aesthetic of the monumental, with their special kind of visual rhetoric, "their uninhibited reliance on special effects, striking compositions, montages, and juxtapositions."

What happens to a public event, the authors ask, when it is celebrated collectively at home? How does the viewing experience of media events differ from the "genres of the everynight?" How do the various power establishments which stage, air, and view these media ceremonials contractually interact to control the event? One of the great paradoxes of a media event, according to Dayan and Katz, is that, on the one hand, it "depoliticizes society, both because it keeps people at home and because it contributes to the false illusion of political involvement," and that, on the other, television "may substitute for the experience of 'being there.'"

Perhaps both the greatest service and the greatest problem of *Media Events* is its contribution of a typology for the critical examination of this television genre. Dayan and Katz classify the types as Contests (the Olympic Games, Hill and Thomas before the Senate Judiciary Committee), Conquests (Sadat in Jerusalem, Pope John Paul II confronting the Polish leadership in Warsaw), and Coronations (which also includes state funerals).

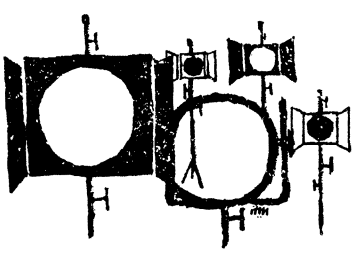
But this critical classification system tends to truss up the authors in a framework that seems somewhat restrictive and forces them at times to slip their own taxonomic traces. "Our corpus," they write, "is limited to ceremonial occasions" which are preplanned, and therefore "exclude major news events."

To draw a line of scholarly convenience between the media event as ceremonial and as a journalistic expression of the conversation of our culture seems artificial indeed. The presidential debates, Sadat's "conquest" of Jerusalem, the moon shots and shuttle launches are not only television "monuments" but belong to a historic realm of shared experience that cannot be contained by Dayan and Katz's three C's. Should we not add a fourth category, Consequence? A fifth, Calamity? Shouldn't the unplanned interruptive thrust onto the screen of rioting at the 1968 Democratic Convention and social chaos in Los Angeles be included in the grammatical "rules" of the media event? Doesn't the influence of television's role as *participant* as well as carrier merit inclusion and examination?

Insightful and important as this present treatment is, Dayan and Katz would do well to consider broadening their definition of the media event to encompass television's ability to provide live coverage of the unexpected and the unplanned. The urgent news event of transcendant importance may evade convenient classification as contest, conquest, or coronation, but nonetheless achieve a stature that, "commands attention universally and simultaneously . . . to tell a primordial story about current affairs."

JERRY M. LANDAY

■ Jerry M. Landay teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; he is a documentary producer and a former news correspondent for CBS and ABC.



New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics

Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Beyond

By Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. New York: Routledge, 1992. $49.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

The introduction of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and theories of ideology into English-speaking film studies was accompanied by a number of glosses, such as Anthony Wilden's 1968 annotations of Lacan, Ben Brewster's 1969 glossary for Althusser, and Stephen Heath's 1973 glossary for Metz. Nonetheless, a whole generation in film studies learned theory mostly the hard way, by reading the original texts. More recently, a number of those who made this effort have turned to writing introductions to theory. The benefits for later generations of film students (and others) are obvious; one hopes the drawbacks are equally clear, despite the increasing numbers of books and articles by writers who seem more versed in surveys and summaries than in the work of the original thinkers.

This contradiction of theory (as a discourse which inhabits educational institutions it cannot and yet must be simplified) is a generic one. Thus, though these remarks are occasioned by *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, they do not represent a particular problem for this very useful book, which compares most favorably with other introductory volumes by answering to a definite need without duplicating an existing text. Based on a principle of "terminological fecundity," *New Vocabularies* is a word-book which may be used as a dictionary; some pages, especially in the three chapters which the preface says were primarily authored by Robert Stam, define as many as a dozen terms, each indicated in the text in boldface. Thus some libraries may classify the book as a work of reference. At the same time, it is written in continuous prose, essay-style, and wants to be a survey text; its five parts cover the origins of semiotics, cinesemiology, film narratology, psychoanalysis, and (a bit surprisingly, until one recalls Stam's previous work on the topic) reflexivity in film. Most of the time, the book succeeds in combining the virtues of its two different models, but sometimes it seems torn between the need of the survey reader for a grounding in the most basic terms and the need of the dictionary reader for a definition of the most obscure terms. Of course, nothing prevents the former from reading through the whole book while the latter consults it at the relevant points.

What help would such readers find? Terms with which I was unfamiliar ("rheme," "zatrudnenie") are clearly explained, and when I wished for a fuller account of a particular term, I always felt that *New Vocabularies* had told me where to look. The preface speaks of ranging from "quasi-technical terms, like 'bracket syntagma,' to much broader and inclusive terms, such as 'reflexivity'"; I found the book particularly good at dealing with those terms ("point-of-view," "identification," "story," "discourse") which may be either quasi-technical or inclusive or both. On the debit side, some attributions are surprising: "excess" is ascribed to Lacan, "repetition" to Stephen Heath, and "profilmic" to Tom Gunning. Each of the three writers does make significant use of the term in question, but in no case does the usage seem original. Second, the principle of lexical invention, while in one sense reasonable, produces some odd effects: Sarah Kozloff, though certainly a significant scholar, looms rather larger than I would have anticipated, apparently because she has coined some terms. Third, I found that I could think of terms encountered in the film-semiotic literature which are not included (e.g., "mytheme," "ideologeme"); meanwhile, the book finds room for "art of exhaustion," by (unexplained) extension from John Barth's essay "The Literature of Exhaustion."

Fourth, and more importantly, the intended objectivity of the book's implicit intellectual history sometimes verges on passivity. Intertexts cited in the preface include Laplanche and Pontalis's *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics*, and Dudley Andrew's *Concepts in Film Theory*. Conspicuously absent (though later acknowledged by Sandy Flitterman-Lewis in her section on psychoanalytic semiotics) is that more pungent and polemical model of an introductory survey, Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory*. I mention this last because I think *New Vocabularies* could have been less apologetic to poststructuralism, and less shy about suggesting that many film scholars rushed past semiotics without fully absorbing it. In one sense, this is to fly in the face of the book's stated intention that it will not intervene in the debates it describes; on the other hand, one of the things we have learned from semiotics is that any description is already an interpretation, and the educational effect I have in mind could have been achieved with a minimum of comment.

To put the same point another way, the book could have done a more active or instructive job with the intellectual history of film studies itself; alongside its reconstruction of the saga of Peirce, Saussure, Bahktin, et al., as a linear narrative, the book could have told the more discontinuous story of the ebbs and flows of their importance to film scholars. Most effective in communicating what it calls the "received methodological wisdom of film theory," *New Vocabularies* is not necessarily barred from a modicum of commentary on that wisdom. Without that modicum, however, it will seem a bit too willing to accept

established habits of thought; thus it defines Lacan's Symbolic and Imaginary, but not his Real, does much more with cinematic narration than with cinematic signification, and scants the proximate semiologies of painting, photography, theater, gesture, etc., apparently because it wants to distance itself from the "imperialist," "scientistic," and "totalizing" semiotics of 20 years ago. In sum, a student reading this book would be thoroughly informed as to what has happened in film semiotics, but not perhaps in such a good position to think critically about what has not happened and what could still meaningfully occur. Even so, the volume is a significant addition to the film studies bookshelf; we have nothing quite like it, and will likely find ourselves thumbing it through it for some years to come.

MICHAEL WALSH

■ Michael Walsh teaches at the University of Hartford.

Projections

A Forum for Film Makers

Edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue. London: Faber and Faber, 1992. $14.95.

Anyone who closely follows movies has undoubtedly noticed that the public's awareness of film as an art form is at its zenith, due largely in part to the advent of home video but also because of the rapidly expanding coverage of the media by the media. Yet every year the top grossers seem even more shallow than the ones from the year before. Much of this has to do with the fact that the media chooses to focus more on film as a business than as an art form; indeed, steadfast movie lovers have grown weary of talk of deals, properties, and grosses.

Director John Boorman has grown weary of such talk himself, and his current anthology, *Projections*, co-edited by Walter Donohue, is a welcome corrective which doesn't ignore the fact that film is an economic art form. The book, the first in an annual series, consists of essays by film-makers on their work. Some of the pieces, such as Gus Van Sant and River Phoenix's "My Director and I," and "Matters of Photogenics," by Nestor Almendros, are reprinted from other sources, but the bulk of the book includes pieces which have not been previously published and which impart varying degrees of valuable information.

The first and longest section of the book is entitled "Bright Dreams, Hard Knocks," and it is Boorman's 1991 journal of observations about both his own film work and the art form in general. The journal is a fascinating mix of optimism (represented by Boorman's comments on the films he likes and his own hopes of directing a script called *Broken Dream*) and the brutal realities of the film industry, such as the disastrous public and critical response to his underrated film *Where the Heart Is*. Boorman ponders the eternal conflict in cinema between the need for personal expression and the economic demands of the most expensive of art forms, and lays the groundwork for the chapter to follow.

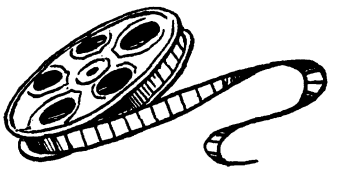
That chapter, "The Burning Question: Absolute Freedom?" is the most entertaining in the book, as dozens of directors respond to the question, "If you were given an unlimited budget, and were under no obligation to distribute it, what film would you make?" More often than not, those questioned claim that it would be undesirable and impossible to make a picture under such conditions, since it is precisely the conflict between expression and commerce that makes movies what they are.

For fans of director Hal Hartley, the entire screenplay for *Surviving Desire* is included. This little-seen featurette was created by Hartley for the "American Playhouse" series, and the publication of the screenplay enables readers not only to encounter a film which they might have missed, but also to discover that Hartley is one of the few screenwriters whose writing takes on qualities of superior literature.

The remainder of the book consists of interviews with Jonathan Demme, Michael Mann, and Gus Van Sant, along with significant contributions to film history, such as a diary kept by Emeric Pressburger. All of the pieces in the book address the issue of art vs. commerce in one way or another, yet all remain distinct in their insights. The book is being promoted as a forum for filmmakers, but it's really just a document for anyone who is concerned with where cinema has been and where it might be going. In the preface, Boorman promises a new edition every year, with next year's journal being written by Bertrand Tavernier. If the 1992 edition is any indication of what is to come, Boorman's guarantee is most welcome.

JIM HEMPHILL

■ Jim Hemphill is a film student at Columbia College in Chicago.



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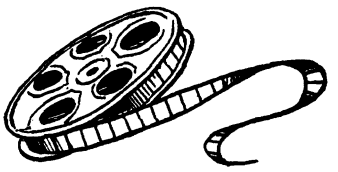

Reframing Japanese Cinema

Authorship, Genre, History

Edited by Arthur Nolletti, Jr., and David Desser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. $39.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Right after Joseph L. Anderson attempts to define a Golden Age of the *katsuben* in this collection's epic account of the vocal accompanist to most silent era Japanese films, he quips, "in a history as generalized and conventional as this, we must have a golden age." It struck me on reading that self-conscious remark that we have reached a wonderful point in Western studies of Japanese cinema, with sufficient material and working scholars to foster a dialogue sophisticated enough for in-jokes.

The joke references Noël Burch's *To the Distant Observer*, published in 1979, which is one of several texts used as background for this informative volume of essays (the others are Anderson and Donald Richie's *The Japanese Film*, David Bordwell's *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, and the writings of Sato Tadao). Like those earlier books, *Reframing Japanese Cinema* goes a long way toward deepening our knowledge of Japanese cinema's fascinating and varied development as an industry and its importance to world film history. Its special emphasis on the pre-World War II period makes it a particularly valuable text for people familiar only with 1950s masterworks like *Rashomon* and *Ugetsu Monogatari*.

It is also gratifying to read a collected work that assembles essays published or translated for the first time, countering the increasingly tiresome tendency of presses to republish work. Only one chapter—David Desser's interesting study of the postwar samurai film—has appeared in fundamentally similar form before. The editors have written a knowledgeable introduction on recent developments in Japanese film studies and offer opening remarks for each of the essays.

The book is divided into three sections: authorship, genre, and history. The first two sections are the most uneven in offering new material or approaches, with some essays presenting only extended analyses of films or portions of films. Indeed, "reframing" may not have been the most appropriate title. Although the introduction by the editors proposes that the essays revise received wisdom about Japanese cinema, several of the chapters do not stir things up as much as one might have hoped, nor do most stray too far from the existing canon of Ozu-Mizoguchi-Kurosawa-Oshima and action or melodrama genres.

The editors attempt to frame the authorship section as a reworking of assumptions about origin and reception, and some essayists make good use of the opportunity to expand the theory of authorship. Arthur Nolletti presents a strong case for studying the films of Gosho Heinosuke more closely, reviewing the social edge of his 1930s *shomin-geki* (contemporary stories about the lower middle class), noting Gosho's formative influence upon that genre, and analyzing *Woman of the Mist* (1936) in detail. David Desser's chapter on Kurosawa's *Ikiru* is a suggestive narrational analysis that points toward further work on the director's innovative technique. Max Tessier's essay on Oshima, originally published in French in 1979, does not really reframe the director's reputation, but stands as one of the best overviews of Oshima's eclectic career and major stylistic tendencies. Robert N. Cohen's essay on Mizoguchi's *The Life of Oharu* and Kathe Geist's chapter on Ozu's late films, while containing interesting observations on their topics, are marred by, respectively, the narrowness of the former's patriarchal reading and the latter's unrelenting symbolic interpretations and obsessive anti-formalist positioning.

The genre section features companion essays on pre- and postwar sword films by Lisa Spalding and Desser which display the continuity of this important genre in Japanese cinema. Spalding's essay is particularly valuable for outlining the *topoi* of the prewar films, and owes a considerable debt to Sato Tadao's conceptualizing work on this genre. Keiko Iwai McDonald's chapter on the *yakuza* film picks up many of the threads left by Spalding and Desser in chronicling how more recent films have updated the older sword films' tendencies. McDonald's work makes it clear that there is much more work needed on *yakuza* films and the economic and social context of their production. Gregory Barrett, like Spalding, owes much to Sato in his essay on comedy, but one wishes for more innovative theories of comedy and satire than those provided in his piece. William B. Hauser's chapter on *Fires on the Plain* is an extended description of the film that seems misplaced in this volume.

If the first two sections of the book encourage the reader to pick and choose, the third section presents four superb essays on aspects of Japanese film history. Komatsu Hiroshi writes in detail on characteristics of Japanese film prior to World War I, making invaluable parallels with recent work on primitive cinema in the West. Iwamoto Kenji's essay on early Japanese talkies describes the changing functions of sound during Japan's long transition to talkies in the early and mid-1930s, noting the important influences of radio and Clair's *Sous les toits de Paris*. David Bordwell makes a compelling argument for the "decorative classicism" of prewar Japanese cinema, proposing a Japanese variant of classical film style that both uses and tests the Hollywood variant. Surveying Japanese films that are outside of the usual Western canon, his essay has significant implications for the

argument over a "specific" Japanese film, as well as the methodology for the history of film style.

Many of the essays in this collection—particularly Bordwell's, Komatsu's, and Nolletti's—implicitly present their topics within an international framework, arguing not so much for deepening our knowledge of a national practice but for recognizing how Japanese film has taught us about cinema itself. Appropriately, it is the old "Japan hands" who bring this out most forcefully. Joseph L. Anderson's chapter on the *katsuben*, or *benshi*, is the fourth essay in the "history" section, and it is a small masterpiece of dedicated research, careful comparisons with traditions, and delightful, affectionate writing. Although he downplays it in his essay, Anderson's assertions about the narrational functions of the *katsuben* and the "commingled" quality of the performance have great interest for scholars of film reception.

Donald Richie's brief analysis of a sequence in Ozu's *Late Autumn* takes off from many ideas in his Ozu book and—interestingly enough—in Bordwell's *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, ending with his eyewitness account of Ozu's actual filming of the scene. It is a precious moment in a book that impressively builds upon our knowledge of Japanese film. Indiana University Press has prepared the volume with care, and only a thin bibliography detracts from the usefulness of the book.

DONALD KIRIHARA

■ Donald Kirihara teaches at the University of Arizona.

Representing Reality

Issues and Concepts in Documentary

By Bill Nichols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. $39.95 cloth; $17.50 paper.

Bill Nichols' new book demonstrates that discussion of documentary can be both theoretical and critical, that in fact certain "extra-textual" issues such as technology or ethics, which previously all too often substituted *for* textual analysis, do intertwine in crucial and significant ways *with* it. Nichols established himself as a significant voice in this area of film studies some time ago, certainly with the publication of *Ideology and the Image*, and its emphasis upon documentary, in 1981. Developing on several of the ideas explored in that book, he attempts in *Representing Reality* nothing less than to document the documentary itself, to chart the distinctive terrain of this *terra incognita* (xi) in all its myriad forms.

Indeed, Nichols is a pioneer. For despite the publication in the last few years of several new books on documentary (including *The Documentary Idea*, by Jack Ellis, and a revised edition of one of the two standard histories of documentary, Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*), the subject has been marginalized in film scholarship. As Nichols himself notes in his preface, there is no precedent for such a book in the scholarly discourse on documentary film. (William Guynn's *Cinema of Nonfiction* [1990] comes to mind, but its semiotic emphasis makes it more narrow in focus by comparison.) With consistent insight and intelligence, Nichols has succeeded in setting the terms for future informed discussion of documentary.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, Nichols defines documentary as a distinct kind of filmmaking, looking at the relations between the documentary and history, and considering the unique position in which it places the viewer. Building on his earlier work on the "voice" of the documentary, Nichols identifies what he sees as the four documentary "modes of representation" (expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive), and explores each in terms of its different ethical and aesthetic implications. He coins the term "axiographics" to discuss the ethics of space, illuminating how in each mode the distinct physical relation of the camera to its subjects and the position of the film-maker(s)—his/her "presence"—are crucial to a documentary film's response to the act of documentation, to the text's status in the real world. Nichols takes us considerably further than Grierson's "creative treatment of actuality," the classical definition of documentary beyond which we really hadn't progressed very far until now.

Part Two, "A Fiction (Un)Like Any Other," explores the nature of the "indexical bond" between the documentary image and its historical referent and the consequent similarities and differences between documentary and fiction. Nichols thoughtfully examines the "sticky stuff" of history and its stubborn residue or "excess." His distinctions between perspective, commentary, and argument are particularly helpful in clarifying the nature of documentary rhetoric, and he convincingly elucidates both the continuities and the differences between documentary and narrative better than anyone before him.

Nichols manages to be at once taxonomical and humanist, for he never forgets that the subjects of documentary are real people ("social actors"). Hence, in Part Three, the extended consideration of the importance of the body and mortality as issues of representation. Nichols builds on Vivian Sobchack's earlier work in this area, and the question of how to represent people without appropriating them as Other in some way brings to the fore a theme that informs the entire book. Unfortunately, it is in this part of the book that Nichols is not entirely successful in

argument over a "specific" Japanese film, as well as the methodology for the history of film style.

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By Bill Nichols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. $39.95 cloth; $17.50 paper.

Bill Nichols' new book demonstrates that discussion of documentary can be both theoretical and critical, that in fact certain "extra-textual" issues such as technology or ethics, which previously all too often substituted *for* textual analysis, do intertwine in crucial and significant ways *with* it. Nichols established himself as a significant voice in this area of film studies some time ago, certainly with the publication of *Ideology and the Image*, and its emphasis upon documentary, in 1981. Developing on several of the ideas explored in that book, he attempts in *Representing Reality* nothing less than to document the documentary itself, to chart the distinctive terrain of this *terra incognita* (xi) in all its myriad forms.

Indeed, Nichols is a pioneer. For despite the publication in the last few years of several new books on documentary (including *The Documentary Idea*, by Jack Ellis, and a revised edition of one of the two standard histories of documentary, Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*), the subject has been marginalized in film scholarship. As Nichols himself notes in his preface, there is no precedent for such a book in the scholarly discourse on documentary film. (William Guynn's *Cinema of Nonfiction* [1990] comes to mind, but its semiotic emphasis makes it more narrow in focus by comparison.) With consistent insight and intelligence, Nichols has succeeded in setting the terms for future informed discussion of documentary.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, Nichols defines documentary as a distinct kind of filmmaking, looking at the relations between the documentary and history, and considering the unique position in which it places the viewer. Building on his earlier work on the "voice" of the documentary, Nichols identifies what he sees as the four documentary "modes of representation" (expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive), and explores each in terms of its different ethical and aesthetic implications. He coins the term "axiographics" to discuss the ethics of space, illuminating how in each mode the distinct physical relation of the camera to its subjects and the position of the film-maker(s)—his/her "presence"—are crucial to a documentary film's response to the act of documentation, to the text's status in the real world. Nichols takes us considerably further than Grierson's "creative treatment of actuality," the classical definition of documentary beyond which we really hadn't progressed very far until now.

Part Two, "A Fiction (Un)Like Any Other," explores the nature of the "indexical bond" between the documentary image and its historical referent and the consequent similarities and differences between documentary and fiction. Nichols thoughtfully examines the "sticky stuff" of history and its stubborn residue or "excess." His distinctions between perspective, commentary, and argument are particularly helpful in clarifying the nature of documentary rhetoric, and he convincingly elucidates both the continuities and the differences between documentary and narrative better than anyone before him.

Nichols manages to be at once taxonomical and humanist, for he never forgets that the subjects of documentary are real people ("social actors"). Hence, in Part Three, the extended consideration of the importance of the body and mortality as issues of representation. Nichols builds on Vivian Sobchack's earlier work in this area, and the question of how to represent people without appropriating them as Other in some way brings to the fore a theme that informs the entire book. Unfortunately, it is in this part of the book that Nichols is not entirely successful in

achieving his stated aim of making theory answerable to films rather than the other way around. Nichols perhaps anticipates this response in his description of the book's tripartite division as "an ascending order of complexity," (xiv) although this section is more provisional in approach.

Inevitably in so ambitious a book, one might quarrel with some of Nichols' specific claims. For example, he asserts (59) that Michael Rubbo's interventionist approach to documentary film-making is no longer tenable because it lacks sufficient awareness of the implications of the film-maker's own presence. Such an assessment seems to me a serious undervaluation of this neglected director, for Rubbo's work is precisely about authorial presence; indeed, his willingness to incorporate himself as a "negative" social actor allows him, with mock naïveté, to examine the very issues that so concern Nichols. It should be noted, too, that for some reason the index is not comprehensive, which makes it frustrating to use. But such reservations are minor in terms of the book's overall achievements.

In his preface, Nichols attacks the hermetic, elitist tendency of much contemporary film theory, and for the most part his prose is readable even at its most densely theoretical. (There is frequent and annoying repetition, perhaps because parts of the book derive from several previously published essays.) Yet while the book is primarily theoretical, Nichols demonstrates his ability to engage with particular texts, as in his analyses of, for example, *The Thin Blue Line* or *Roses in December*. And his comparisons can be both ingenious and illuminating, as in his bold yoking of ethnographic film and pornography, which he rightly considers within the documentary context.

Ultimately, Nichols demonstrates with convincing skill that documentaries are both ideologically laden and aesthetically pleasurable. *Representing Reality* is, therefore, not only a major addition to the relatively small but growing number of books on the documentary film, but also another welcome indication that film studies, in scrutinizing more closely the texts themselves, is finding that they are more than mere individual instances of the institutional apparatus at work.

BARRY KEITH GRANT

■ Barry Keith Grant is Director of the Film Studies Program at Brock University in Ontario, Canada.

The Road to Romance and Ruin

Teen Films and Youth Culture

By Jon Lewis. New York: Routledge, 1992. $45.00 cloth; $14.95 paper.

In the alliteratively titled and ill-advisedly unillustrated *The Road to Romance and Ruin*, Jon Lewis, associate professor of English at Oregon State University, makes an engaging and thoughtful contribution to teen-oriented film studies. Offering not "*the* cultural history of youth" but "a cultural history," his work is frankly idiosyncratic and avowedly impressionistic, meant to be "more suggestive than it is comprehensive." Lewis's writing is lucid and evocative, his critical vantage is skeptical and sophisticated. Best of all, not once does the tone of bemused condescension that drips into so much writing on youth films creep into his prose.

The unifying principle here is what Lewis calls "teen anomie," the uniquely adolescent alienation and resistance that finds expression in everything from subcultural style wars to smartmouth backtalk. Undogmatic in spirit and alert to nuance, Lewis freely acknowledges the ambivalence of adolescence and, by extension, studies of adolescence. His strategy then is "to let the culture speak for itself in its very contradictions, in its very incoherence"—not a bad idea when examining a subculture sending out the mixed and antagonistic signals of youngsters who say they're born to run and then go right back to Daddy. Exemplary is Lewis's discussion of the televisual flow of MTV, in which he analyzes how the network manages to combine videos that are "alternately sexist, racist, and horribly violent, or at best narcissistic and elitist" with prim calls to "good citizenship, conformity, and fitness."

Lewis cuts a wide swathe through teen films and youth culture since the 1950s, but he comes naturally to rest on the past two decades, not the first two. His taste leans towards non-exploitation fare, and few examples of splatter, science fiction, and animal comedy find their way onto his marquee. His critical chops vis-à-vis rock music are solid, but though he knows the words he refuses to dance to the sound-track beat ("mainstream rock and roll sugarcoats an essential misanthropy and misogyny as teenage romance and rebellion"). In the main, Lewis dotes on the ironical, top-of-the-line teenpics whose true demographic kin, as likely as not, is well beyond the age of acne—*Privilege*, *Repo Man*, *River's Edge*, *Absolute Beginners*. Indeed, aficionados of drive-in double bills may find fault with a study of teen films and youth culture that has a whole lot to say about Dick Hebdige and Angela McRobbie and not a word about Arkoff and Nicholson,

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Roger Corman, Golan and Globus, or Troma Productions. Yet for all the missing links, Lewis has a sharp eye for the oddball yet revelatory teenpic, such as the putative fun-in-the-sun romp *Where the Boys Are* (1960), where the genre suddenly seems to expose truths that it is only dimly aware of.

Of course, for the politically minded, the social distortion unleashed in teen culture and expressed in the teenpic is potentially progressive and liberating—the main reason the young have virtually supplanted the proletariat as the revolutionary class of choice in Marxist critiques of capitalist culture. Lewis isn't so sure. Though Dick Hebdige's influential and perfectly timed ethnography of the British punk scene, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, hovers like an anxious parent over *The Road to Romance and Ruin*, the author is wary of the left-wing tendency, especially among the British Cultural Studies crowd, to romanticize white punks on dope into a revolutionary vanguard, to "mistake the visceral for the political—the dramatic for the meaningful."

Disappointingly, the book's political horse sense isn't matched by its sense of history. Inevitably perhaps, a few factual mistakes and editorial gaffs burrow into the copy, but the central historical trouble isn't in the details. Too often, youth culture emerges from *The Road to Romance and Ruin* as a static concept, teenagers like frozen embryos careening across time and space in a wild chickie race from *Rebel Without a Cause* to *Rumble Fish*. Sometimes Lewis is adroit enough to bring off these freewheeling associations and, to his credit, he is up front about his critical preference for common links among teen cultures, not distinctions between them. But though youth itself can be maddeningly oblivious to history, that doesn't mean youth studies should be. To take an obvious example: AIDS has wrought a sea change in the way teenpics negotiate sexual consummation. The casual rutting of *Porky's* (1981) has given way to the positively chaste courtships of teen-targeted films in the late 1980s and early 1990s, not to mention the downsizing of the youthful protagonist to prepubescence (viz, Macaulay Culkin). Likewise with class and race: where teenagers of the 1950s took to heart the rock 'n' roll and rampaging spirit of *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), today's teens—especially in the inner city—seem more likely to embrace the strong patriarchs of *Lean on Me* and *Stand and Deliver* with an almost heartbreaking desperation. Lewis's daring leaps across time and genre can be enlightening and enjoyably synoptic, but they can also be dizzying and indiscriminate, like a grab-bag selection from the teenpic shelf at Blockbuster Video.

Finally, Lewis's even-tempered and deliberate study ends on an oddly apocalyptic note. "The future, all things considered, promises to be a terrifying place," he intones, citing a UNESCO worst-case scenario. If the plight of the young beyond the arms of Western capitalist culture may indeed be desperate, the status of teenagers within its bosom is, all things considered, privileged beyond measure. Though a few succumb to anomie, suicidal tendencies, and bad hair days, the rest grow out of it.

THOMAS DOHERTY

■ Thomas Doherty teaches in the American Studies Department at Brandeis University.

Screening the Text

Intertextuality in New Wave French Cinema

By T. Jefferson Kline. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. $34.95.

With a few isolated exceptions (for example, *Last Year at Marienbad*), few works of "New Wave" French cinema have been the object of sustained, intensive critical examination. And, as T. Jefferson Kline points out in *Screening the Text*, surprisingly little of the criticism that has appeared attends to the *nouvelle vague* film-makers' "obsession with the book." One thinks of the young couple defiantly reading books in bed about their particular, opposing interests in Truffaut's *Bed and Board*, for example, or—to take Kline's favorite "symptom" of the phenomenon—the emergence of the bookstore as privileged (Parisian) location in works such as *Shoot the Piano Player* or *Les Cousins*. Kline's thesis—in an Oedipal scenario wholly in keeping with his psychoanalytic orientation—is that with the coming of the New Wave, film-makers no longer wished to *adapt* works of literature but to *usurp* the function of the book. (I must confess that his is a methodology which I do not ordinarily favor; I have read, and admired, his book "against the grain" for this reason.)

Not coincidentally, this shift occurred not just at any point in time but during the heyday of the "new novel" and other radical currents in French literature. And so, for Kline, new film-makers "recast the meta-literary concerns of the 1950s into metacinematic ones." There are historiographical problems with this thesis, I think, but they are of comparatively little importance, given that Kline's study is not primarily a work of film history but a collection of seven film analyses which develop similar (but not identical) themes, centered on the relations between film and literature. The works studied are Malle's *The Lovers*, Truffaut's *Jules and Jim*, Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's *Last Year at Marienbad*, Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* and *Les Cousins*, Rohmer's *My Night at Maud's*,

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It is just as well that Kline included Bresson, however, for the chapter on *Pickpocket* is one of the strongest parts of the book. A trend emerges: the films that respond best to Kline's analysis—*Pickpocket*, *Marienbad*, and *My Night at Maud's*—seem to be the ones that are the most traditional, in fact the most *literary* ones in diverse senses of the word. These chapters can stand with the very best academic film criticism in either French or English. Kline's attentiveness to the ironies of *My Night at Maud's* makes him far and away the best analyst of that classic but little understood film, and the chapter on *Marienbad* is lovely, satisfyingly detailed, and ultimately convincing. He sees, for example, an uncanny parallel between the relations between the film's two principal characters and the creative interaction of its two principal creators—a dynamic of seduction and resistance; here, it strikes me, on a different and (for this book) more important level he has got his film history just right. Kline also makes the refreshingly untrendy argument that although *Marienbad* is a multi-layered work of multiply determined meanings, there *is* quite possibly one single, deep structure narrative in it, centered on the issue of incest. (On this subject, somewhat daringly, he cites Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's critique of Freud's theories—this is one of several reasons that not all Anglo-French psychoanalytic critics will like the book.)

The works of Truffaut, Malle, and Chabrol, however, arguably reveal fewer of their secrets under Kline's scrutiny. (But possibly other readers may consider that in reading these chapters my resistance to current psychoanalytic theory surfaces, a repressed hostility that needs only the slightest pretext to make itself known.) It strikes me that these directors were, in fact, considerably less "literary" than Kline would have them, and that in their cases the more common view of intertextuality in the New Wave—that it is other *films* that serve as the most notable intertexts—is more fruitful in close readings. Nonetheless, *Screening the Text* certainly merits respect for having proposed a strong and original approach to these (for the most part rarely examined) works.

Kline's book is teeming with ideas of all degrees of merit and applicability. It is rarely dull—or rather, it would be rarely dull if one could read it more easily. As the text stands, it is frequently frustrating not because of any lack of ideas or critical insights, but because of its awkward English style. This issue alone is probably the source of my ambivalence about Kline's chapter on Godard, which certainly has wonderful things in it but is very hard to grasp as a whole. Why do academic presses, even very good ones like Johns Hopkins, give so little help to their authors in this area? Is it because good copy editing is expensive? Is it because academics themselves have a vested interest in obscurity, as is often argued by those hostile to the profession? In any event, *Screening the Text* could have greatly benefited from a final rewrite and some careful editing. Too often, just getting through it is a chore. Readers are advised, however, to have patience: this is one of the best recent books on New Wave cinema, in either French or English.

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■ Alan Williams teaches at Rutgers University; his most recent book is *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*.

Tele-ology

Studies in Television

By John Hartley. New York: Routledge, 1992. $15.95.

John Hartley loves to play in the dirt. He is fascinated with "mixed metaphors" and "marginal, ambiguous and scandalized" categories of analysis, with the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, television and reality, producers and audiences: "[T]he point about dirt, crudely, is that it encompasses notions of ambiguity, contradiction, power and social relations all in one." Television studies, Hartley insists, allows us to make no clear-cut distinctions, to construct no fixed and permanent categories. He wants a mode of criticism he calls "intervention analysis," which is not governed by either "high-culture fastidiousness or right-on political squeamishness" but which rather confronts the contradictory status of the medium directly and works to change rather than simply document its properties.

Hartley's essays reflect a recurring fascination with "things that don't fit" and the complex discursive logics (or, to use a word he seems to prefer, regimes) by which they are put into place by critics, producers, viewers, or government regulators. He is concerned with the social processes that define and redefine television, its genres, its audiences, its truths, and its pleasures. If Hartley is right, we are all going to have to get down in the dirt with him sooner or later, or risk building theoretical sandcastles that will crumble as fast as we construct them because they have only thin air as their foundation.

Tele-ology gathers together 15 of Hartley's provocative essays, some of which have already become classics in the Anglo-American Cultural Studies tradition, many

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of which come from obscure publications and have thus attracted little attention till now. Hartley writes from what he describes here as a "marginal place," from Western Australia, whose largest city, Perth, advertises itself as "the loneliest, most isolated capital city in the world." As a result, some of his most interesting essays have taken a bit of time reaching a wide readership in Great Britain and the United States.

Hartley is perhaps best known by American readers for his early and influential collaboration with John Fiske, *Reading Television*, and his incisive and systematic treatment of the semiotics of contemporary journalism, *Understanding News*. The Hartley-Fiske collaboration has become a standard introductory textbook, offering insights into the history and methodology of media studies, providing richly nuanced readings of specific programs, and introducing the useful concept of television as a "bardic" form which shares many traits with traditional oral culture. Hartley's best-known essay, "Invisible Fictions," has provided the theoretical framework for much subsequent work on television audiences, while his work on television news and docudrama complicates easy and familiar distinctions between these forms, focusing particularly on the complex process by which the media seeks to separate fact from fiction.

While I have admired both books and have found some of his individual essays tremendously useful in my own work, *Tele-ology* came as something of a revelation to me, a fresh introduction to Hartley's remarkably original vision as a critic and theorist. His essays defamiliarize the stale and stoic language of contemporary scholarship; Hartley satirizes in one sharp essay the "strutting-in-front-of-the-mirror phase" of television studies, its search for self-validation in the obscurantism of French theory. No one could make the same accusation against him. Hartley has mastered theory but not been mastered by it. Yet what impressed me most was his playful, barbed, and colorful writing style, which brings into the academy the freshness and spunk of New Journalism, which tempers Cultural Studies jargon with slang and metaphor, which juxtaposes high and low with anarchic abandon. Hartley pulls into his writing metaphors from everyday life ("rearviewmirrorism," "windscreenwiperism") and from popular culture (Kurt Vonnegut's notion of "blivit") with a panache that is one part Dr. Seuss, one part Hunter S. Thompson, but which never substitutes style for substance.

Yet Hartley's stylistic explorations are, in many ways, even more important than his claims about the complexity of television, appearing as they do at a time when many young scholars are struggling to rethink the terms and language through which we discuss popular culture. Rejecting the distanciation and alienation of previous writers, Hartley writes about his own personal pleasures in the popular, about the ways that television was introduced into his life as a young boy and the ways it continues to function in his life today. He seems determined to shove through the "brick wall between those who watched television and those who went to art college and university to be trained in cultural production and critique."

What emerges most powerfully in this collection is a sense of Hartley's restlessness and dissatisfaction with found knowledge, even that of his own production. No sooner does he introduce a critical term or concept than he seems to tire of it, pushes it into a new direction. In his introduction he writes of the difficulty he has in finding a stable position from which to speak about television: "an uneasy balancing act with one foot on a floe called reality and one on a floe called discourse," and confesses that he has embarked on a "risky enterprise," which may not leave his dignity intact, that indeed allows little to remain except his own desire to skate further and further out onto thin ice.

Hartley acknowledges from the outset that these essays will not cohere into a single linear argument about either the nature of television or the goals of television studies. He covers many different subjects, from the career of pop star Kylie Monogue to media coverage of the America's Cup races, from the codes and conventions of television news to the less charted genre of "continuity," the all-but-invisible segments which create flow between programs. One of his most virtuoso essays, "Quoting not Science but Sideboards," offers a social history of television viewing in Australia, including rich speculations about the impact of videotape recorders on both public and private life. He examines the power relations between the producers and their viewing public as well as the competing "regimes" within broadcasting, which determine the relative status of news and entertainment. He writes about television as a local, national, and global phenomenon, television as seen by its creators and by its audiences.

Hartley complains that much traditional criticism of popular culture has been a displaced and often poorly disguised criticism of democracy itself: "The trouble with television was not that it was so bad, but that it was so popular." Such morally stringent positions "simply couldn't be shifted by informed argument, because they weren't based on any such grounds." Hartley, by contrast, remains a true democrat, respecting his readers both in the ways he describes their complex and fluid relationship with the media and in the ways he addresses them through his own writing. A remarkably learned man within a discipline which has sometimes relished its own parochialism, Hartley treats both canonical literature and contemporary popular culture with respect; his best writing often hinges on a kind of intellectual "frottage," the

unauthorized and often charged contact between high and low culture, between reader and text. He assumes a shared access to the cultural resources of global television, trusting us to make connections or recognize the significance of his often fine-grained discussions of local phenomena and particular examples.

Where Hartley leads, others will follow—or so we can hope. Hartley's *Tele-ology* represents perhaps the ideal summation of a decade's work as a television critic as well as the prospectus for the next decade's explorations and speculations. What finally confronts the reader is a sense of the sheer heterogeneity of television, which must be matched by the dexterity and creativity of its best critics. A medium which is never one thing for more than a few minutes requires a mode of criticism which is never one thing for more than a few pages. And few have done as many different things in a single volume as Hartley does here.

HENRY JENKINS

■ Henry Jenkins is Director of Film and Media Studies at MIT.

To Desire Differently

Feminism and the French Cinema

By Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990. $15.95.

To Desire Differently: Feminism and The French Cinema is perhaps the most ambitious of recent scholarship on female film authorship, for it contextualizes the objects of study not only as historical subjects of feminism and film culture(s) but also as contributors to a national cinema seeking alternatives to the classical Hollywood paradigm. While Flitterman-Lewis foregrounds historical and national context, she uses a theoretical model of cinema as an enunciative apparatus, a model that underpinned some of the earlier, less historically grounded work on film authorship and spectatorship. Building on a definition of filmic enunciation developed by Metz and Bellour, Flitterman-Lewis argues that the concept describes the desiring production of the text involving both "spectator" and "author" (both of which are freed from restrictive notions of individual personality). The desiring production of the text refers to its generation of fantasmatic scenarios of desire (based on the primal fantasies of origins, seduction, and castration) that both author and spectator could be said to "share." The way in which these fantasies (which supersede the individual) are generated—how the scenarios of desire are ordered and organized in vision—depends on the historical moment when the film-maker lives and works and on the specific biographical or personal history.

One of the strengths of *To Desire Differently* is its detailed yet succinct documentation of the film culture(s)/movements—first avant-garde, poetic realism, and French New Wave, respectively—that defined the historical moments of the "authors" under examination, making the book valuable as a history of French film as well as of female authorship. Flitterman-Lewis argues that the dynamic interaction between these historical moments and the film-makers' personal histories—especially their relation to different moments in the history of feminism, to some kind of aesthetic vision, and (for Dulac and Epstein) to their collaborators—partially determined enunciative processes (of fantasy scenarios) which "subvert, re-work, or offer alternatives to the pervasive logic of masculine desire articulated by dominant cinema." The discussions of French film culture(s)/movements are not offered, however, merely to retread what is by now a familiar opposition between European national cinemas and the classical Hollywood paradigm, but also to suggest the intervention these female/feminist authors made *within* French film cultures opposed to or ambivalent toward Hollywood.

Perhaps the importance of this move is most evident in the section on Marie Epstein, a writer-director often relegated in film histories to marginal categories such as "sister of director" (Jean Epstein was her brother) or "assistant director" (she collaborated with Jean Benoit Levy on over ten films). Epstein's work with her brother involved her in the subjective cinema that so preoccupied Dulac and the first avant-garde, but Flitterman-Lewis concentrates her efforts in placing Epstein in the economic/industrial, national, and aesthetic context of poetic realism of the 1930s, the period and film culture in which she codirected eight sound films with documentary/educational film-maker Benoit Levy. While the two shared with the poetic realists a desire to represent the lives of children and the quotidian aspects of life through a naturalistic ambience, Epstein's interest in the feminine questions of "maternal desire, female reciprocity, and women's emotive capability," which goes back at least to the 1920s, distinguishes the films within the poetic realist corpus. In a thorough and sensitive close textual analysis of *La Maternelle*, Flitterman-Lewis argues that in reworking visual structures by relaying them through the eyes of a (female) child, the film recasts the fantasy of the primal scene from the masculine Oedipal standard (which could be said to dominate both French poetic realist and Hollywood films) to one expressing female longing—the child for the mother and the mother for the child.

The section on Epstein suggests that the relation between an author's personal biography/interests and the

unauthorized and often charged contact between high and low culture, between reader and text. He assumes a shared access to the cultural resources of global television, trusting us to make connections or recognize the significance of his often fine-grained discussions of local phenomena and particular examples.

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The section on Epstein suggests that the relation between an author's personal biography/interests and the

historical moment when she lives is one of overlaps and competing frames of reference. A similar strategy of reading is performed in the section on Varda and the French New Wave. In the chapters on Dulac, Flitterman-Lewis reads the texts with, rather than against, the theories of the first avant-garde. This, of course, makes sense, since Dulac was one of the main theorists of this movement (and Flitterman-Lewis is especially skillful in her close reading of Dulac's theories). While Flitterman-Lewis convincingly argues that the "feud" between Dulac and Artaud (the scenarist of *Seashell and the Clergyman*) is based on misattributed remarks and that the interest of Dulac and Artaud in eliciting the spectator in the experience of psychic processes overlaps with the Surrealist project, the placing of the film securely within Surrealism still poses some potential problems for its placement within feminism. I do not disagree with Flitterman-Lewis's belief that the film, in evoking an image of woman *as image*, investigates how the female body is constructed as "feminine" by unconscious processes of desire. What is at stake is whether this investigation can coexist with the film's competing evocation of male narcissism. What is needed is a more thorough exploration of how *Seashell and the Clergyman*, which Flitterman-Lewis claims is the inaugural film for Surrealism, is or is not distinguished from so much work in that movement, which, as Susan Rubin Suleiman argues (*Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* [Harvard University Press, 1990]) often subverts phallic dominance only to reassert it.

What is also somewhat problematic is Flitterman-Lewis's contextualization of "fantasy theory." As used in film studies, the theory suggests the affinity between the film-text and the way unconscious ideas are organized into fantasmatic or imaginary scenarios. The film text, like the fantasy scenario, enacts or sets out a process/place of desire, which potentially offers multiple subject positions for the spectator. Flitterman-Lewis aligns her work with Bellour's concept of enunciation, but argues that his understanding of gendered subject positioning in fantasy is too deterministic in its consideration of sexual difference and identity as fixed poles of masculinity and femininity. Since Bellour was discussing classical Hollywood texts in the argument in question, it would seem that Flitterman-Lewis's critique suggests she considers it possible for the spectator of classical Hollywood texts to be able to take up multiple identificatory positions not rigidly aligned to either biological or social constructions of masculinity and femininity. And yet, in the course of *To Desire Differently*, she implies that only avant-garde or texts clearly opposed to the classical Hollywood cinema can provide this possibility.

Again, this is not to argue with Flitterman-Lewis's readings of the film texts or authors under examination, but to suggest the need for a more explicit discussion of the political stakes and implications of using a "fantasy" theory model. If all film texts produce fantasy scenarios that allow for the possibility of gender mobility, what is at stake in the production (and critical support) of the avant-garde? I think Flitterman-Lewis implies answers to this question but does not foreground how controversial and/or slippery a theory of fantasy is for feminist film studies.

Although I missed such an explicit discussion of the pitfalls of using what is in many ways a most productive theory, I still find *To Desire Differently* a most important work. Its sustained commitment to textual analysis—and the close readings here are superbly written—and to a historical (and national) consideration of female authorship makes it a valuable contribution to feminist film scholarship.

MARY DESJARDINS

■ Mary Desjardins teaches in the Radio-TV-Film Department of the University of Texas at Austin.

To Free the Cinema

Jonas Mekas and the New York Underground

Edited by David E. James. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992. $49.50 cloth; $17.95 paper.

These 24 essays, reminiscences, and personal statements make an important contribution to "the recovery and preservation of a history of filmmaking in New York that is rapidly being lost," as David James writes in his introduction. They could hardly do otherwise, considering Mekas's prominent role in so many New York-based institutions that have nurtured independent-experimental-avant-garde film: the Film-Makers' Cooperative and Cinematheque, The New American Cinema Group, *Film Culture* magazine, *The Village Voice*'s "Movie Journal," Anthology Film Archives—all of which, it should be noted, were (or are) principally concerned with the distribution or exhibition or promotion rather than the actual production of films.

Thus "a history of filmmaking in New York" includes all aspects of film production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. Virtually all of the contributors to this book deal with some aspect of "film-making" in this broader sense of the term. Yet readers seeking detailed commentaries on Mekas's films will not be disappointed. The major diary films, from *Walden* (1969) to *He Stands*

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in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life (1985), receive extensive critical attention, and there is a good discussion of the early *Guns of the Trees* (1961), as well as an introduction to Mekas's poetry written in Lithuanian (but soon to appear in an English translation).

If there is a significant gap in the book's coverage of (in Paul Arthur's phrase) "the biographical legend called 'Jonas Mekas,'" it is precisely in the area of biography. Although many details about Mekas's life and relationships with other people appear in these pages, none of the contributors pulls the details together into a coherent picture of the man and his times. Calvin Tomkins' 1973 profile for *The New Yorker* continues to be the best biographical piece on Mekas. Furthermore, except for an item in the book's appendices called "Showcases I Ran in the Sixties," Mekas's own voice is not to be heard except for quotations from his films and writings selected by other people for their own discursive purposes.

The book does, however, offer an exemplary mixture of other voices and points of view that range from the anecdotal to the rigorously analytic and theoretical. Personal impressions and recollections come from some of Mekas's contemporaries and colleagues: George Kuchar, Rudy Burkhardt, Richard Foreman, Robert Breer, Peter Kubelka, Stan Brakhage, Nam June Paik, Richard Leacock, and Andrew Sarris. The more analytic and theoretical works are too numerous and diverse to summarize here, but I want to draw upon a few of them to indicate how the book presents both Mekas's films and his place in "the New York Underground"—though, of course, the two areas of enquiry frequently overlap.

There is a strong tendency to discuss the films in terms of literary and cinematic genres. Diaries and journals serve as the principal reference points for David James' commentary on *Walden*, and Marjorie Keller finds "an uncanny likeness" between Mekas's diary films and "women's diary literature and autobiography, recently unearthed and reevaluated *as* literature." Michael Renov places Mekas in the tradition of essay writers from Montaigne to Barthes, who have taken advantage of the essay's "tendency toward complication (digression, fragmentation, repetition, and dispersion) rather than composition." Renov also discusses Mekas as a documentary film-maker, but I find Jeffrey Ruoff more illuminating in his comparisons of Mekas's films to the most personal kind of documentary: home movies. Whatever their point of reference, however, most of the writers treat the films as personal, autobiographical statements—which is what makes them most problematic for Maureen Turim, who challenges the assumption that "cinema as an apparatus of representation" can be truly autobiographical, and that "the self can . . . simply capture or control its own filmic articulation." Turim goes on to argue that "personal cinema," as practiced and promoted by Mekas, harbors similar unexamined assumptions that "not only prescribed notions of gender, but also a myth of the artistic persona."

If the films are open to this sort of oppositional reading, so too is "the biographical legend called 'Jonas Mekas.'" Whereas Paul Arthur places Mekas in the context of the most radical movements in the arts and politics of the 1960s, and shows him to be capable of "implant[ing] a spirit of community into a field where only ragged individualism had flourished before," Lauren Rabinovitz interprets Mekas's influence quite differently. By emphasizing what she perceives as a formalist bias in Mekas's choice of films to champion in his writings and in finding the same bias in the "essential cinema" collection at Anthology Film Archives, Rabinovitz characterizes Mekas as one of the principal forces that "reconfigured existing power relations in the New York independent cinema, and recuperated the radical potential of overtly political cinemas into safe, conservative categories."

While there is some truth in the now familiar complaint about Anthology's contribution to conservative canon-making, the actual programs of screenings at Anthology, especially in recent years, have been extremely varied and loaded with films that could never be construed as formalist or canonical. Moreover, as John Pruitt demonstrates, Mekas's critical premises are much broader and the films he liked much more varied than Rabinovitz seems willing to allow. Nevertheless, if Arthur's essay favorably evaluates Mekas from a 1960s counterculture point of view, Rabinovitz shows how different things can look in the light of "competing discourses, notions of conflict, and larger cultural practices" in the 1990s.

WILLIAM C. WEES

■ William C. Wees teaches in the English Department at McGill University.

Unspeakable Images

Ethnicity and the American Cinema

Edited by Lester D. Friedman. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991. $44.95 cloth; $18.95 paper.

The question of who can speak about, create images of, or otherwise represent any group other than a (variously defined) mainstream culture has recently become one of the most volatile and simultaneously dynamic areas of public discussion. *Unspeakable Images* as an anthology devoted to exploring the representation of

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The question of who can speak about, create images of, or otherwise represent any group other than a (variously defined) mainstream culture has recently become one of the most volatile and simultaneously dynamic areas of public discussion. *Unspeakable Images* as an anthology devoted to exploring the representation of

ethnicity in American film is certainly timely in addressing this issue. Editor Lester Friedman's preface describes the organization of the book into two sections—one which incorporates considerations of ethnicity into traditional film analyses and a second wherein ethnicity intersects with cultural studies, ethnography, class studies, and other disciplines in relation to filmic artifacts. Altogether there are 15 essays devoted almost entirely to Hollywood films. The range of topics and films includes comedies, the star system, musicals, the work of Cecil B. De Mille, Carmen Miranda, Robert Altman, John Ford, Eddie Murphy, and Woody Allen (of course).

Friedman's is the first essay and voices his desire that this anthology can expand the possibilities for discussion. To that end he raises a central set of issues around notions of "authentic" voices, offering a brief review of Werner Sollers' concepts of "consent," "descent," and "biological insiderism" in American social history. This discussion is intended to frame the following group of essays on diverse aspects of American film and its treatment of ethnicity.

Ana López's piece on "Latins from Manhattan" offers a convincing example of how a particular historical moment framed Hollywood's representation of Latin Americans as "good neighbors" while the United States was at war with the "bad guys" (Japanese and Germans). Both Gina Marchetti and Robyn Weigman argue the necessity of addressing in detail the complex interactions of race, ethnicity, and gender rather than privileging any one of these as singular basis for theory and/or interpretation.

Charles Musser's discussion of early film comedy employs concrete historical fact and numerous examples from individual films to emphasize issues of immigrant identity along with the complexity and ambiguity of assimilation issues (including class). Its exploration of how these films seem to interact with their social-historical context takes the essay out of the tired groove of positive/negative image concerns. And Claudia Springer's examination of mainstream action-adventure and reporter films set in Third World locales demonstrates how a central cultural trope—narratives of (mostly male) self-discovery in relation to ethnic difference—is played out in a very popular film form.

One of the most complex and provocative essays is Ella Shohat's "Ethnicities-In-Relation." In her definition of multi-ethnic society all communities are "necessarily implicated . . . in one another," sharing "permeable boundaries of identity." (216) Thus ethnicity is described as a "changing set of historically diverse experiences situated within power relations." (216) Shohat also emphasizes the necessity of assuming diverse readings by different viewers. Her choice of American musicals for this discussion is particularly interesting because this is a genre minimally devoted to narrative or to art historical or literary conventions of realism. Her discussion, for example, of Jewish characters in blackface and of Zelig as ethnic chameleon (230–31, 232) clearly ground her observations in a particular historical moment and social context so that she is able to illuminate several complex stages of identity-formation over time. Given the quality of that discussion, Shohat's occasional lapses into rather moralistic conclusions seem oddly out of place.

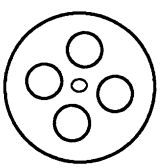
The essay also takes up the extremely interesting issue of how often films use romantic love and interethnic marriage to represent a painless resolution of cultural difference. (238) Curiously, the discussion comes to a rather abrupt finish with the characterization of this as "liberal hegemonic discourse." It would have been more interesting to hear Shohat investigate the reasons for the long-standing American tendency to embrace myth rather than face history.

To return to the discussion of the volatility of issues of ethnicity and cultural difference, it is important to note that one of Sollers' major points is his assertion that Americans have historically and consistently favored "consent" over "descent." Individuals and groups become who they are by virtue of their own choices rather than through inherited status, wealth, race, ethnicity, or religion. Sollers argues further that this process of fashioning and refashioning both society and individuals from an enormous diversity of backgrounds is at the core of American history and cultural experience. Thus the current pressure to expand the definitions of our collective identity and listen to new voices is entirely consistent with one of the basic characteristics and strengths of American culture.

It thus seems odd to find no discussion of the large body of contemporary works (by producers like Julie Dash, Camille Billops, Marco Williams, Wayne Wang, Lourdes Portillo, Janice Tanaka, Rea Tajiri, and many others) which are urgently concerned with issues of gender, race, and ethnicity. While *Unspeakable Images* is a useful introduction to earlier periods of American cinema in relation to ethnicity, it misses a major opportunity to explore and relate the most recent aspects of that discourse to earlier film practice.

WANDA BERSHEN

■ Wanda Bershen is Director of the National Broadcast Archive of The Jewish Museum in New York.



Voyages of Discovery

The Cinema of Frederick Wiseman

By Barry Keith Grant. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992. $39.95 cloth; $15.95 paper.

In *Voyages of Discovery*, Barry Keith Grant views Frederick Wiseman as an American original who structures film documentaries by his own rules and presents his footage in seemingly rough-hewn fashion without explanation or apologies. Grant's book is roughly chronological, beginning with Wiseman's earliest work and then moving through his major documentaries in thematically organized blocks. Thus, the first chapter, "Man with a Movie Camera," correctly sees Wiseman as the American Vertov, obsessed with documenting the societal structures he sees around him, and discusses Wiseman's need to create an alternative vision of the world we live in—but do not really see—every day of our lives. Chapter 2, "American Madness," considers the early documentary features that consolidated Wiseman's reputation, as well as Wiseman's "apprentice" work in the cinema. After working for Shirley Clarke as an assistant on *The Cool World* and other projects, Wiseman struck out on his own with the well-known documentary *Titicut Follies* (1967), which documented the inhuman world of an insane asylum with terrifying precision.

Other films followed in rapid succession: *High School* (1968), *Law and Order* (1969), *Hospital* (1970), and *Basic Training* (1971), all documenting various public institutions caught in the act of crumbling from within. Grant's use of frame enlargements in his discussion of these films points up the importance of Wiseman's framing and shot composition. A raised finger (in *High School*) can become a threat; in that same film, a grotesque close-up of the school's vice principal "graphically expresses the teachers' domination over the students." The school itself is seen as a "factory," in all the worst senses of that word, and the teachers wear "thick glasses [which] serve as an image of the school administration's myopic approach to education." Above all, Wiseman's world is a cinematic landscape of oppressive details, and Grant's study brilliantly foregrounds the film-maker's penetrating gaze.

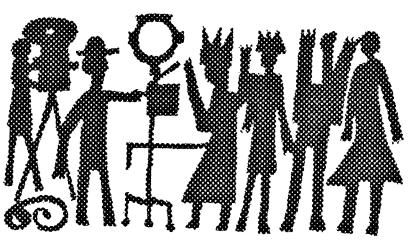
Wiseman's later documentaries are perhaps gentler, less confrontational, more relaxed in their observational stance. Grant groups these works into thematic subsets that effectively highlight the primary concerns of the film-maker in each instance of cinematic practice. *Basic Training, Manoeuvre* (1979), and *Missile* (1988) are examined in a chapter ironically titled "The Big Parade"; *Primate* (1974), *Meat* (1976), and *Racetrack* (1984) are grouped together under the heading "Blood of the Beasts," an appropriate homage to Franju's pioneering study of a Parisian abbatoir. Chapter 5, "You and Me," explores Wiseman's films that center on the human condition (*Essene* [1972], *Blind* [1987], *Deaf* [1987], *Adjustment and Work* [1987], and *Multi-Handicapped* [1987]), relentlessly conveying the multitude of inconveniences, hardships, prejudices, and injustices borne by those who are seen as "other" in our increasingly uncaring society. Indeed, one of the points Grant makes here is that in the making of these films, Wiseman is stepping out from the crowd simply through his selection of subject matter. While other documentarians might choose "hotter" material edited for greater manipulative impact, Wiseman lets the situation he documents shape his relaxed, unhurried editorial suture, and it is this concentration on the most minute and generally unobserved aspects of existence that makes Wiseman, as Grant notes, a supremely moral artist.

In a chapter titled "The Bad and The Beautiful," Grant chronicles in detail Wiseman's participation in *The Cool World* as well as *Seraphita's Diary* (1982); the book concludes with "The Ship Goes On," a chapter devoted entirely to *Near Death*. That each chapter has a fictive referent reflects Grant's assessment of the task that Wiseman has set himself: to create a documentary counterpoint to the escapist Hollywood fantasy world we so fervently embrace as "real."

Barry Keith Grant effectively dissects key moments in the best of Wiseman's films; frame enlargements lend the volume an additional air of pictorial authority, and it is solidly grounded in both recent and classical critical methodologies. The index and the bibliography are thorough and scrupulously accurate. Grant's sympathetic yet incisive examination of Wiseman's method of operation as a documentarist makes *Voyages of Discovery* an essential book in any film theorist/historian's library.

WHEELER WINSTON DIXON

■ Wheeler Winston Dixon is Chairperson of the Film Studies Program at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.



Widescreen Cinema

By John Belton. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. $35.00 cloth; $18.95 paper.

Widescreen Cinema ranks as a very important new book. John Belton's project crystallized a decade ago, when the papers of the research department of Twentieth Century-Fox, the studio that innovated Grandeur and CinemaScope wide-screen systems, were deposited in the Columbia University Libraries. Belton skillfully mined those papers. We should thank him; all should read *Widescreen Cinema.*

Beginning with the advent of motion pictures as a popular medium in 1896, Belton places wide-screen cinema (that is, wider than the four-by-three classical framing), in historical context. He describes his method of history as ever moving forward, sideways, and backward at the same time, spreading out in all directions. He admits he began writing a straightforward history of CinemaScope, but what has emerged is a history of the relationship among an ever-expanding field of interrelated cinematic events, from the shape of the image to the role of the spectator, from the basis for technical change to the crucial transformations of narrative conventions.

Belton has sought to offer us a new model of history, self-consciously *not* writing yet another linear history. I do not agree with all the theoretical tenets Belton postulates in his introductory chapter—he particularly admires the work of Jean-Louis Comolli—but I praise him for making clear to the reader the methods by which he will attempt to answer the questions he has raised.

There are ten chapters in *Widescreen Cinema.* Close examinations of three wide-screen systems are privileged—Cinerama, CinemaScope (with two chapters), and Todd-AO—and form the heart of the book's 300 pages. Before these core chapters, Belton examines the frustrations and failures of prior innovations. His final two chapters detail the effects of the wide screen on film aesthetics. Chapter 9 in particular, on spectatorship transformation, offers a wonderful addition to the literature and ought to be required reading; Belton understands the multiplexing of modern-day moviegoing.

In his final chapter, Belton returns to economics as the fundamental power that drives (and has driven) the U.S. film industry. That alone offers a fine enough conclusion, though it undoubtedly will frustrate those fascinated by sociocultural explanations. I wish he had offered a more pointed summary of the profound implications of his revisionist film history. And although I recommend that all scholars read Belton's fascinating 60 pages of endnotes, a traditional bibliography would have helped. The book would also have been improved with more images from wide-screen films, particularly any images from color films.

Curious lapses abound. For example, Belton seems to think he has discovered that suburbanization had a profound effect on the film industry in the 1950s. But many have written about that effect in recent years, although he fails to cite this prior work.

Or, for instance, Belton presents the Uptown theater in Washington, D.C., as the unique example of a typical 1930s cinema. But the Uptown was opened later than most, was fancier than all but a few neighborhood houses, was of an art-deco style (not European or Eastern inspired), and was in a very high-income neighborhood. The Uptown was an exception, and its half-page photographic citation as the only example in Chapter 3 undercuts the very points Belton so eloquently makes in the adjacent pages.

Smaller details also nag. But in the end Belton has created a book that skillfully grapples with fundamental questions of film and society.

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Despite the novelty and usefulness of Bowman's use of the term "space," her book is in many ways frustrating. She writes extremely tersely; without its appendix and index *Master Space* takes up fewer than 150 pages. She needs stronger and lengthier explication and justification of her choices, her terms, and even her textual analysis. Above all, she needs transitions and a conclusion that puts her studies of Capra, Lubitsch, Sternberg, and Wyler together in a meaningful way. Happily, one omission from the book is refreshing. Bowman spends little time positioning herself in relation to other film theorists and film theories. She says what she has to say and gets out.

TINKY WEISBLAT

history, and details I could check readily were off. Recommended for the casual fan, if only for the novelty value of a book with Mayer as its hero (Altman's animus against Mayer's latter-day nemesis, Dore Schary, is palpable).

GREGG RICKMAN

Balski, Grzegorz (comp. and ed.). *Directory of Eastern European Film-Makers and Films 1945–1991*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992. $79.50.
Slater, Thomas J. *Handbook of Soviet and East European Films and Filmmakers*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992. $69.50. These two reference books, from the same publisher on more or less the same material, complement each other despite their redundancy. Balski's massive tome is a full list of credits for nearly 400 directors from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Slater's book has biographical sketches for the same personnel, with less extensive credits but more detailed commentary than the bare-bones facts found in Balski's notes. Slater's listings also include scenarists, cinematographers, animators, and even the rare novelist of influence, in addition to competent potted histories of each nation's film industry and country-by-country chronologies of key events and films. Given all this, and the fact that Balski inexplicably omits the occasional key figure (such as Ivan Passer), Salter's book is the recommended one, if only for library reference collections: it's mighty dry, but it's solid.

G. R.

BFI Film Classics. London: BFI Publishing, 1992. Edward Buscombe, Series Editor. BFI's National Film Archive is amassing good-quality showprints of 360 films it considers essential to film's history. This Film Classics series parallels the Archive's collection-in-process. Running an average of 85 pages, each title contains an author's evaluation augmented by production research, frame enlargements, occasional production stills, credits, and a bibliography.

The Big Heat, by Colin McArthur. Expanding somewhat on his comments about the 1953 Lang film in *Underworld USA* (including several of the same frame enlargements), McArthur elaborates on discrepancies from William McGivern's novel, pointing up expository shifts that readjust the moral ambiguities. While fascinating in itself, a chapter devoted to the author's political experiences in the BFI Education Department during the 1960s comes over as a curious anomaly.

Citizen Kane, by Laura Mulvey. Mulvey discusses *Kane* as a New Deal-inspired response to threats of American isolationist impulses immediately before Pearl Harbor. Additionally, her feminist and psychoanalytic perspectives conceive Kane's behavior as a series of Oedipal confrontations with older male figures, compounded by a fetish-ridden accumulation of artifacts effected by traumatic separation from the mother. Mulvey gives special attention to portions of the Mankiewicz-Welles script that never reached the screen.

Olympia, by Taylor Downing. Himself a documentary film-maker, Downing details problems faced by Riefenstahl and her crew in a time before Arriflex cameras and Zoomar lenses. Drawing on Riefenstahl's memoirs (soon to be published in English), he itemizes strategies that included pits beneath runways, an immersible camera, and cameras attached to athletes during training.

Singin' in the Rain, by Peter Wollen. Cliff Edwards deserves to be more than "a ukelele player" (25) in the 1929 version of "Singin' in the Rain." Carping aside, Wollen's monograph effectively traces the kind of character-inflected dance performance developed on stage, then choreographed for camera by Gene Kelly. A section on blacklisting reads out-of-sync until one realizes how many members of the Freed-Kelly-Donen troupe were affected. Color stills miss the intensity of Technicolor and look better. Derrida lurks offstage until page 55.

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ERNEST CALLENBACH

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Compared to the Fleischer Brothers and to Otto Messmer's Felix, much early Disney proves to be untypically repetitive and derivative, at least until the Alice series, where results are uneven, but the significance of *Walt in Wonderland* isn't tied to Walt's successes. Rather, the authors contextualize their primary subject within an exceptionally broad and rich background of Americana, popular culture, and Disney-to-come.

Title by title and year by year, the book outlines Disney's apprenticeship in Missouri and the move to Southern California. In the process, specifics of animation production, such as new uses for traveling mattes and shot designs that soon echoed live-action compositions and editing, are simply explicated. Other animators, especially Hugh Harman, Rudolph Ising, and Ubbe Iwerks (all contributed heavily to Disney's growing sophistications and established individual reputations in the 1930s) receive their due. Specifics of an endangered but constantly enlarging business enterprise are detailed. Screen characters come (Pegleg Pete, Oswald into Mickey) and go (Alice, Julius the Cat, legions of small rodents).

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In illustration, the author describes production circumstances and critical estimations surrounding three titles: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *The Naked City* (1948), and *Touch of Evil* (1958). Bypaths along the way include speculations on nineteenth-century realism and naturalism among writers and painters and the fortunes of left-wing screenwriters—Albert Maltz in particular—both inside and out of the Party. If a critical frame of reference exists, it's Bazin. Because the interest centers largely on attributing a particular social vision to noir, *Autopsy* shies from the many formalist interests that often pervade noir studies, although Richardson does enjoy describing set design.

J. F.

Weisser, Thomas. *Spaghetti Westerns—the Good, the Bad and the Violent: 558 Eurowesterns and Their Personnel, 1961–1977.* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992. $45.00. During its heyday, the Italian Western exerted a key influence on both European and American commercial cinema, an influence still active today in contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Up to now, researchers faced frustrating situations in cataloging the overwhelming number of alternative titles, foreign language editions, and pseudonyms used by directors and actors. Thomas Weisser's new filmography (containing plot synopses, credits, appendices listing the various contributions of performers, directors, composers, scriptwriters, and cinematographers) supplies readers with a valuable work for continuing investigation. Weisser notes cross-generic associations with the developing crime, horror, and *giallo* films, alert to the fact that many talents such as Argento

and Fulci began their careers within this genre. Other welcome appendices list the various Django, Sartana, and American versions of the genre.

TONY WILLIAMS

Welles, Orson, and Peter Bogdanovich, edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum. *This is Orson Welles*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992. $30.00. Despite the considerable quality of Peter Bogdanovich's best work as a director, his major contribution to film history may well be the series of interview books he did in the 1960s with John Ford, Fritz Lang, and Allan Dwan. To this series can now, at last, be added his legendary interviews with the late Orson Welles, conducted over several years beginning in 1969, and then set aside for some 20 years.

A good deal of very valuable material has now been brought to light. To take *Citizen Kane* as our example, we learn here for the first time of Welles' intentions in a detail like his "forced smile" in the "Declaration of Principles" scene, and of a chance meeting in an elevator between Welles and W. R. Hearst (Hearst stayed mum). The discursive interviews track freely through Welles' film career, Bogdanovich struggling to keep to some sort of chronology while Welles slips free of all moorings. (As a consequence, the interviews trail off, and Welles' European work seems scanted.) The old director is a patient foil to Bogdanovich's dogged persistence, and Bogdanovich deserves credit for allowing Welles' sly digs at him to stand. Bogdanovich's long-planned interspersion of letters, studio documents, and the like works, here, to confirm Welles' versions of events, as for example in the controversy over Herman Mankiewicz's credit (an amazing memo revealing Mankiewicz's complaints about *Kane*'s style, and his anti-Semitism, doesn't hurt).

Jonathan Rosenbaum, the book's editor, does the project honor in presenting this material in clean, annotated form. His notes tidy up the errant details of Welles' memory, and an appendix presenting a version of the complete *Magnificent Ambersons* demands comparison, as their emphases are different, with Robert Carringer's just published work on same. Rosenbaum's major contribution, however, is a huge (130-page), virtually day-by-day chronology of Welles' life.

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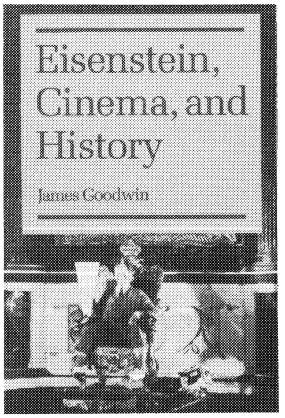

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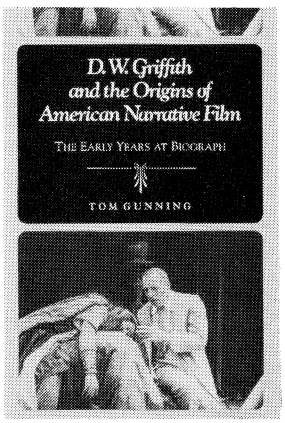

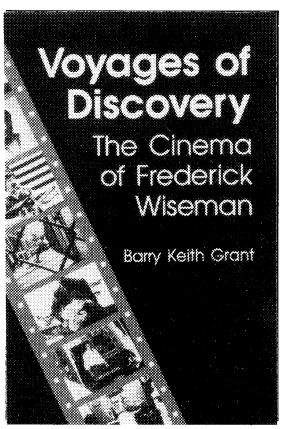

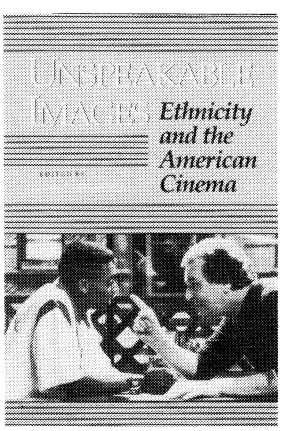

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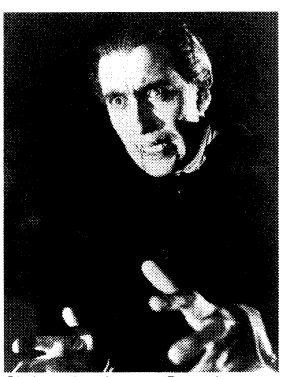
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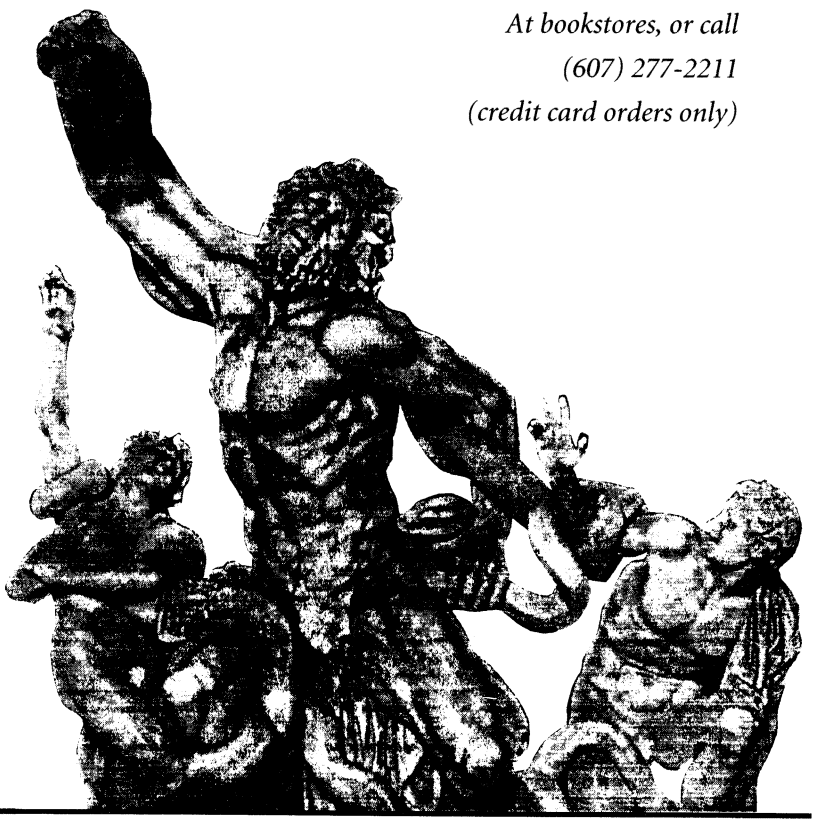

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